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COWARD OR HERO?





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COWARD OR HERO ?



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COWARD OR HERO?

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

MRS. SALE BARKER



WITH TWENTY-FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
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ADVENTURES IN INDIA.

By W. H. G. KINGSTON. With Coloured
Frontispiece and 36 Illustrations.

THE HOLIDAY ALBUM FOR BOYS.

By HENRY FRITH. With 92 Illustrations.

BEING A BOY.

By CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER.

HIS OWN MASTER.

By J. T. TROWBRIDGE.

FRIEND OR FOE.

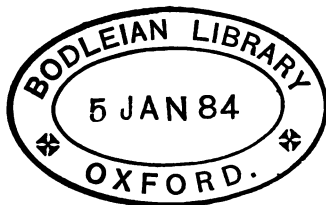
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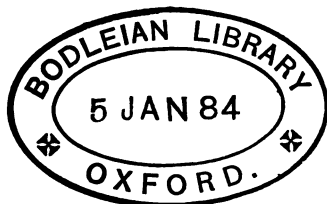
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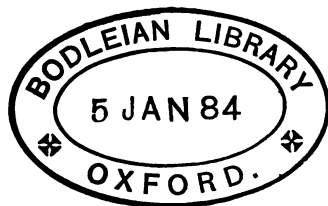
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COWARD OR HERO?

I.

THE CAPTAIN'S INDIGNATION.

"Now then! What is the matter?" asked my father in a sharp tone, impatiently throwing down the newspaper.

"Nothing, papa," I answered, but in a trembling voice.

"Nothing, you say? Then why did you pull down the blind? Why did you hurry away from the window? And why, sir, has your nose turned white? What is there to be seen in the street to frighten you like that?"

The tears rushed to my eyes, and I began to sob, as I replied, "It isn't in the street, it's opposite."

My father jumped up so quickly from his chair that it fell with a loud noise on the polished floor of our little dining-room. As to me, I was more dead than alive: my father's fits of impatience terrified me. And on these occasions I would stare at him, and look so stupid, that I used to make him more angry than ever.

He went to the window, pulled up the blind, and looked at the opposite house. There, at the window, stood a little boy of about my own age, who was always watching to see me come to the window of our house in order that he might make hideous faces and put out his tongue at me across the street.

My father turned round: he stood with his arms tightly folded on his chest; he looked at me from head to foot, and then he said in a sneering voice full of scorn:—"So that is what frightened you! You unfortunate creature, you will never be fit for anything as long as you live. A great boy of eight years old! the son of a soldier, and of a brave soldier, I flatter *myself*. Here am I burdened with a boy as

timid as a hare, yes a regular hare, to bring up. You may well be ashamed, sir. Thirty years' service! Five campaigns! Eight wounds! to come to this; to come to bringing up a boy who is afraid of his own shadow! Hide yourself, miserable child," he went on, "for I am ashamed of you. How shall I have the face to walk about the town; to meet people that I know who will say; 'How goes it, captain? How goes it with you?' What am I to answer to these inquiries, sir? *What* am I to say?"

"I don't know," sobbed I.

"Ah! you don't know; but I know too well. I must answer 'You are very kind, and I thank you; I am well, but I occupy my leisure hours in educating a coward! And that coward, sir, is my own son.' Yes, my own son. And your nose! where did you get that nose, sir?"

II.

MY NOSE.

FROM my earliest infancy the principal and dominant—too dominant—feature in my face, was an immense nose.

Now that this organ is a little disguised by a thick moustache, my friends, to flatter me, compare it to an eagle's beak. But when I had no moustache, my companions who had no wish to flatter me, compared it to the beak of a Toucan. Unfortunately for me this was only too good a comparison, and, what was worse than all, when I was frightened (which alas! happened very often) my nose turned very pale.

"Now then," would my father exclaim, "there's that miserable nose of yours turned white again: rub it, do, so as to give it a little colour."

I was such a simple little fellow, that I used seriously to follow my father's advice, given in

derision, and I would fall to rubbing my poor, large nose most furiously: labour wasted! it turned pale just the same.

My father went on reading the newspaper which he had thrown down as I have described; and I did not stir; I did not sit down nor did I dare go out of the room, but I remained sulking in the corner.

I say sulking, because I can find no other word to describe the state that my father's fits of anger put me into. Anyone who had come into the room and seen me in that corner would have said, "Here is a sulky little boy!" But no, I was not really sulky; I felt very much hurt that my father should speak so harshly to me to cure me of a fault which wounded my own self-respect as much as it did his. I was not sulky then, only deeply distressed; but all sorts of contradictory thoughts passed through my head, and I knew neither how to utter nor explain them: I remained silent and uncomfortable, and people made the mistake of thinking me sulky.

I grieved over my father's reprimand, and

pondered sadly while he read the newspaper. I asked myself, "How is it that other little boys can help being cowards?"

I then made up my mind that for the future I *would* be brave; yet I could not help feeling an inward consciousness that, when the opportunity came for me to show courage, I should only play the coward again. I endured real torture that hour I passed in the corner, and was finding my trouble insupportable, when suddenly the door opened to admit my father's old friend Colonel Boissot.

III.

COLONEL BOISSOT'S SYSTEM.

COLONEL BOISSOT was an old brother-in-arms of my father, who, like him, had retired from the army, and settled down to a quiet life at Loches.

After the first few words of welcome and *politeness* had passed, my father asked the

colonel, if he happened to know of any animal that was more timid than a hare.



"An animal more timid than a hare?" replied the colonel thoughtfully.

"Yes," said my father.

"By Jove, certainly!" answered the colonel, "a frog is more cowardly, because in the old

fable of La Fontaine we are told that the frogs were afraid of a hare."

"Very well," said my father, pointing at me with the newspaper, "there you see a frog then ; I have only to put him in a glass bottle



with a little ladder, to act as a barometer," and as he uttered these words, he looked at me with a vexed and mortified expression, and made me a sign to go out of the room.

The colonel looked at me, with his great

round eyes wide open, and making a slight grimace, asked, "Is he ——"

"Good gracious! yes," replied my father with a deep sigh. The colonel whistled softly, as he looked at my father, and he rolled his eyes back to me with an astonished expression in them, pretended or real. This warlike man felt surprised, apparently, to find a coward in the son of a brother-in-arms. All the time he stared at me I did not dare to move.

At last he shook his head several times and said, grinding his teeth the while, "You know, Bicquerot, I belong to the old school. For such fancies as these (for they are pure fancies), I know but of one remedy," and he made suggestive and disagreeable movements with his cane as if chastising an imaginary coward.

"Oh, no!" my father answered quickly, "no, the remedy would be worse than the malady. And think, too, of his mother: she, the poor dear mother, would go mad. No! no! certainly not."

"You are wrong," drily replied the advocate

of violent measures, "it is an infallible remedy."

"That is possible," said my father; "but *I* could never resort to it." Then turning to me he said in a more gentle tone of voice, "Now go, my poor boy, run and find your mother."

There was something so sad, so touching in the tone of my father's voice, the expression of his face was so kind, that if the odious colonel had not been present I should have thrown my arms round his neck and kissed him.

But I dared not, and as I awkwardly shut the door after me, with trembling hands, I again heard these words issue, one by one, from between the clenched teeth of the terrible colonel: "*Bicquerot, you are wrong.*"

IV.

GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

BUT no! my father was not wrong; for I loved him with all my heart, in spite of his fits of anger, and I would never have deceived him in anything. If he had beaten me, I felt that I could never have loved him so much again. I should, most likely, have become a liar like Robert Boissot. For, after all, the old school system had not succeeded so well with him. It is true that when his father was present, he was all that could be desired in a boy; one would have thought he was on parade too, because of his soldier-like bearing. But when his father turned his back, matters were, indeed, very different. He spoke of the colonel in the most disrespectful way; and I will not repeat here the dreadful untruths which he would utter without the slightest shame. It is true I was a coward, but they might have killed me outright, before I would

have said the things of my parents, that he said of his. And he would laugh while he said them ! Actually laugh.

Before his father, the colonel, this boy would pretend to be most friendly to me : he would call me his " dear good little Paul." If I had dared I would have called him a liar before everybody ; for when his father was not there, he would take me into a corner, and make the most hideous faces at me, and pull my poor long nose, till I cried ; threatening at the same time, if I told anyone, that he would squeeze me to death in the doorway.

Was not this cowardice ? but of a different kind from mine, and surely a far worse kind. " Ah ! if I dared to do things, if I could only get over the nervous trembling and that stupid imagination of mine which showed me dangers in every direction ! " I said this to myself as I walked slowly down stairs ; I did not hurry myself, because my eyes were red, and I was anxious my mother should not see that I had been crying, for I knew it would worry her.

These are the questions I asked myself as

I reached the last step :—" In a small house like this, where I know every corner, why do I fancy that somebody is always hiding to pounce out upon me ? why do I fancy this when I really know that there is no one and nothing to frighten me ? Why do I fancy always that there are strange beasts lurking in the shadows which will jump out upon me to pinch and bite, and prick and scratch me, or perhaps, which is almost worse, place a great hairy paw upon my neck, or look at me with great dreadful eyes ? Why am I so silly as to fancy all this ? But now, for the future, I am resolved I will never be so foolish again."

V.

I SEE A MONSTER.

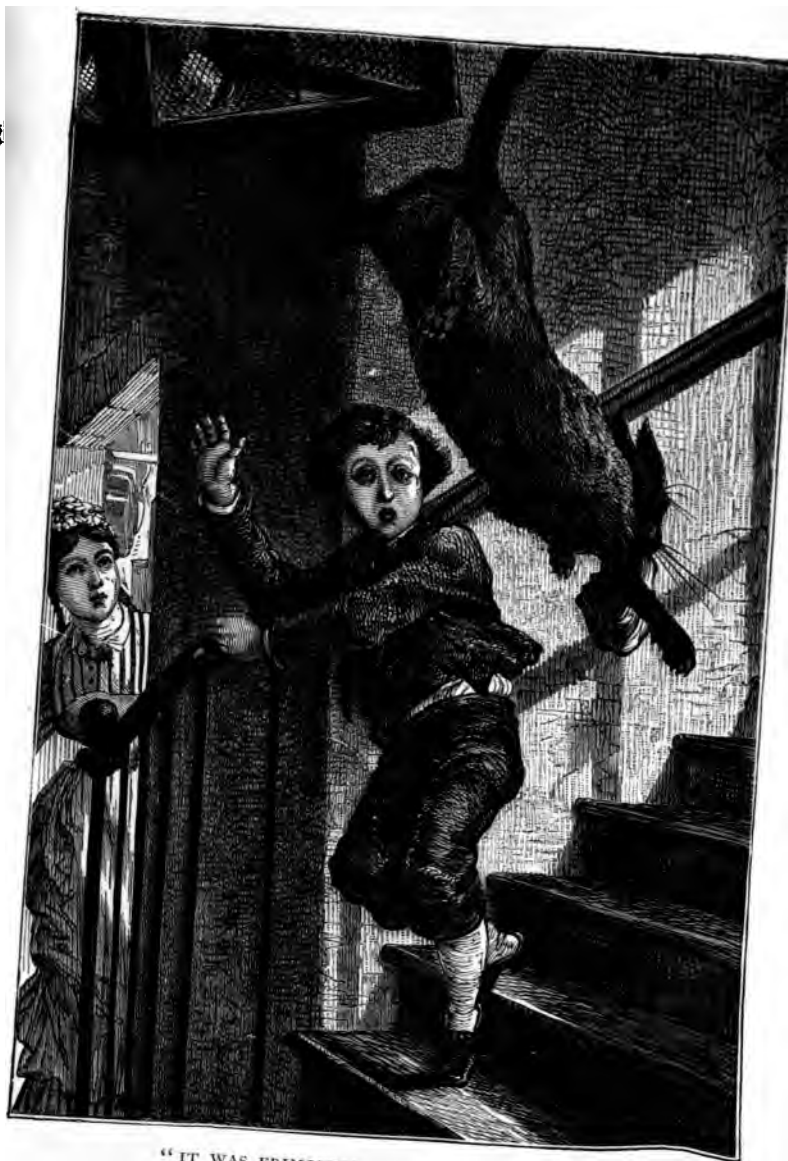
POUF ! Bang ! At that moment something black, light, and at the same time enormously large, some shapeless yet undoubtedly ferocious creature, passed within a foot of my face with

the speed of lightning. It touched the ground without making the least sound, seemed to roll over in the half-dark corridor, and then suddenly disappeared at the little door leading into the garden.

I tried to scream, but my voice failed me : I trembled from head to foot ; my legs gave way and I involuntarily sat down on the last step of the staircase, and covered my face with my hands, not to see again that horrible thing ! Without doubt it would return. It was hiding somewhere, I was sure. What might it **not** do to me ? I waited in an agony, my **eyes** firmly closed. Just then the door of **the** kitchen opened, and my mother, **greatly** surprised, asked me what I was doing there.

I told her all.

As I did so she raised her head, saw the door of the meat-safe open, and said : " **The** creature that has frightened you so dreadfully was still more frightened by you ! It was Frimousse, our great cat, who had come to steal some meat, which I am sorry to see she has done, and when she heard you coming she



"IT WAS FRIMOUSSE, OUR GREAT CAT."

[p. 26.]

was put to flight in a great hurry. "Now, see," said my kind mother, smiling. "Satisfy yourself; the cat has carried off the piece of beef which remained from luncheon. Look, there is the empty dish! Don't be frightened any more, my dear little boy, but now come with me: when Mrs. Puss has behaved in this naughty way, I always know where to find her. Come along, you must see her for yourself."

I answered "Yes" to all my mother said, but in my heart I believed she was mistaken. That horrible creature that passed me was too large, too shapeless, to be our cat.

VI.

FRIMOUSSE.

My mother, taking me by the hand, led me with her into the kitchen, and gave me a glass of sugar-and-water to help me to recover myself. She then showed me Frimousse,

who had taken refuge on the roof of a little shed at the end of the garden, and the naughty cat was there eating greedily her stolen meal. While devouring the meat, she kept jerking her head first to the right, then to the left, as if she found it rather tough. At the same time she looked at us, or rather at me, with a menacing and defiant expression.

"You see now that it was naughty Frimousse," said my mother, in her loving, caressing voice; "don't you, my darling boy? You are quite sure now that there was nothing to frighten you, are you not?"

"Yes, mamma, I do see it: I was a silly boy," I replied.

My reason, the fact of seeing the cat eating the stolen meat, my mother's assertion, everything told me clearly enough that it was Frimousse that had frightened me so: still in spite of all, something within me seemed to deny the fact. Was it possible that Frimousse, our cat that I knew so well, could have appeared so enormous?

Well, it was just possible perhaps ; and now I began to fancy that there was something very strange about that cat. While she was eating, what fierce looks she gave me ! Certainly there seemed something unnatural and odd—dreadful too—about her. And those strange glances which she gave me ! Surely it was against *me* that she cherished spiteful feelings ! Then another idea came into my head : perhaps this cat, who gave me such vicious looks, was not a real cat ? Perhaps, I thought, she has the power, at times, to take the shape of that fearful, that horrible creature which I saw on the staircase.

If I had explained these foolish thoughts to my mother, I knew beforehand how silly she would have thought me, and what she would have answered. I knew also, beforehand that her answer would not convince me. Oh ! how terrible it was ! Still, I preferred to say nothing, and I kept my thoughts to myself to torment me.

VII.

MONTÉZUMA AND CROQUEMITAINE.

I THINK I know partly how this unfortunate and unhealthy state of mind began with me : this painful habit of seeing something extraordinary and terrible in the most simple matters, and of peopling the house with unearthly and mischievous beings. I think it came about in this way :—

When I was quite little, I used often to be given in charge to my father's orderly. He was a brave and honest fellow, and very fond of me. His name was Montamat, but everyone called him Montézuma. Unfortunately for me he possessed far more imagination than judgment.

Whenever I was naughty or unreasonable, he would call for Croquemitaine ; and as he was a ventriloquist you may suppose it was not long before a conversation commenced with *this extraordinary person*, who used to reply to

the questions asked of him from the dark, mysterious, and fearful regions of the kitchen chimney sometimes ; or sometimes from the bottom of my porridge bowl, or again sometimes from the inside of a drawer in the table close to where my little chair was placed. As I believed most implicitly in Croquemitaine's existence, Montézuma made me do exactly as he liked by this means. Just fancy ! here was a man who appeared to me to be on the most intimate terms with a mysterious and supernatural being ! A man who could summon this being at will, and, at a single word, send him off again about his business, just at the moment when, almost mad with anguish, I feared, yet longed, to see the mysterious being appear to me.

Our discussions would always end in the same way when I had been naughty.

"Now will you do it again ?" Montézuma would ask in a stern voice.

"Oh, no ! no ! my good Montézuma," I would cry, "I will never, never do so any more."

"Then, Croquemitaine," — Montézuma would say in a gentle voice,—“you can go away, we will not give you our little Paul to-day; for he has promised to be a good boy.”

“All right! all right! I shall have him the



next time,” a most terrible gruff voice would answer. And repeating “all right” a good many times, the voice sounding less and less distinct and further away each time, Croquemitaine would depart for that occasion.

As I grew bigger Croquemitaine came less

frequently. I believe that Montézuma got tired of always employing the same means of keeping me in order. Still I did not lose my faith in this supernatural being. Very often, when the furniture creaked, or the wind whistled down the chimney or in the passages ; when the porridge-pot boiled over, and made strange grumbling sounds, I felt that there was something more than usual in these noises ; something very strange and mysterious. Then my heart would beat violently, and Montézuma bursting out laughing would cry, "Ah ! ah ! ah ! how white your nose has turned !"

"But," would I reply in a piteous tone of voice, "I have not been naughty."

"That you know best !" Montézuma would answer sententiously. "What does your conscience say ?"

VIII.

THE COLONEL'S HORSE.

THE tormentor chosen by Montézuma to succeed Croquemitaine, was the horse belonging to the colonel of my father's regiment. It was a beautiful white horse with a splendid mane, and a grand thick tail which swept the ground. When he stamped and snorted, and turned his graceful head from side to side, he looked so intelligent, that I easily believed everything that Montézuma told me about him. This marvellous horse, according to Montézuma, knew all that passed, and repeated it to the colonel; also, if I did not take care, all my particular misdeeds to my father. For instance, Montézuma would say, "So you won't eat your soup?"

"No! I won't eat my soup! and pray, what of that?" I would reply.

"Very well," was the answer, "the colonel's horse will tell your father to-morrow on parade!"

I would have eaten my soup if it had been boiling, rather than expose myself to the tale-bearing of that white horse. I learnt, little by little—as Montézuma found me more difficult to manage—all sorts of horrible peculiarities belonging to the colonel's terrible horse. I heard that he would bite most cruelly all little boys who refused to go to bed at eight o'clock, who kicked their father's orderly, or who preferred to sail their boats on the pond in the Palais Royal (where Montézuma did *not* happen to meet his friends) to taking a walk in the Jardin des Plantes (where Montézuma always met his friends). It seemed, according to Montézuma, that this much-to-be-dreaded animal had devoured the little son of the master shoemaker, because he fought with his schoolmistress: nothing had been found of this unfortunate but his shoes, his cap, and a letter in which he declared that he thought he quite deserved his fate.

With a sigh of anguish I would anxiously ask, "And what did his mamma say?"

Montézuma replied, "She was in great grief."

"I will never kick you again, Montézuma," would I cry. "Oh! pray of the horse not to eat me, because it would make mamma so sad."

"Very well; this time you are safe," Montézuma then gravely replied. "But remember, if you ever do so again, he will not listen to my entreaties."

With what an eye of curiosity and distrust did I gaze upon that anthropophagus of a horse, when I was taken to reviews. If I was placed near the colonel, curvetting in pride at the head of the regiment on his splendid white charger, I was seized with a terrible panic.

"Let us go further, Montézuma. Oh! do come away!" I used to pray, "he knows me, he is looking at me!"

"Don't be afraid; while you are with me, and I do not sign to him, he will say and do nothing," replied Montézuma.

"But," I persisted, "don't you see how he looks at me, and how he shakes his head? What does he mean?"

"Well, he means," answered Montézuma,

“ he just means, ‘ I have my eye on you : you must remember that, and take care how you behave.’ ”

IX.

CHILDREN SHOULD CONFIDE IN THEIR PARENTS.

ALL these things terrified me greatly, and yet, to tell the truth, I took a secret pleasure in them. It was an unhealthy excitement, but even men sometimes find, like children, a strange pleasure in what is alarming and mysterious. Much good may it do them !

Montézuma would have been wicked to put all these ideas in my head if he had known the harm they did me. But he had no idea of it, poor fellow ! He must, however, have been rather ashamed of these inventions of his, because he never said a word about them before my father or mother. And I, without his bidding me keep silence, said not one word either, about the matter, except to him. It

was a secret between us. One discovers when one is very young, I am afraid, the charm of forbidden pleasure, or at least, of mysteries, and it was certainly a great pleasure to me to have this secret of the white horse's powers between Montézuma and myself.

Still it was a great misfortune for me that I did not tell all to my father and mother; they would have put a stop to these foolish fancies and mad terrors, which little by little destroyed my spirit, and turned me into the unfortunate coward I became.

People who have children entrusted to them, or who are constantly with them, should make a rule that they shall never be frightened by stories of giants and ogres, or supernatural beings, or in the foolish yet terrible way in which Montézuma used to terrify me.

One cannot tell the effect these fears may have upon children: can never guess the mischief that may be done. When once my father had retired from the army I was no longer under the influence of Montézuma. I no longer believed in Croquemitaine, and had

even lost faith in the colonel's horse; but though the actual belief was gone, the pernicious influence remained, and I was always building up fresh terrors on the ashes of the old ones.

X.

MONTÉZUMA'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

MONTÉZUMA had the most wonderfully flexible face I ever saw. He could literally do anything he liked with it. For instance, he would lengthen his features, raise his eyebrows, and half shut his eyes, and there you had before you the living image of Lieutenant Hardel, the thinnest and most miserable looking officer of the regiment. Then, in an instant, he would puff out his cheeks, half bury his head between his shoulders, and opening his big eyes, roll them about in a terrible manner, and at that moment you beheld an exact copy of Major Taillepain.

When he began these representations, which were performed for me, and me only, I could scarcely contain myself for joy. At each change of countenance, I would clap my hands and cry out, "Again, again, Montézuma! Again, please, again!"



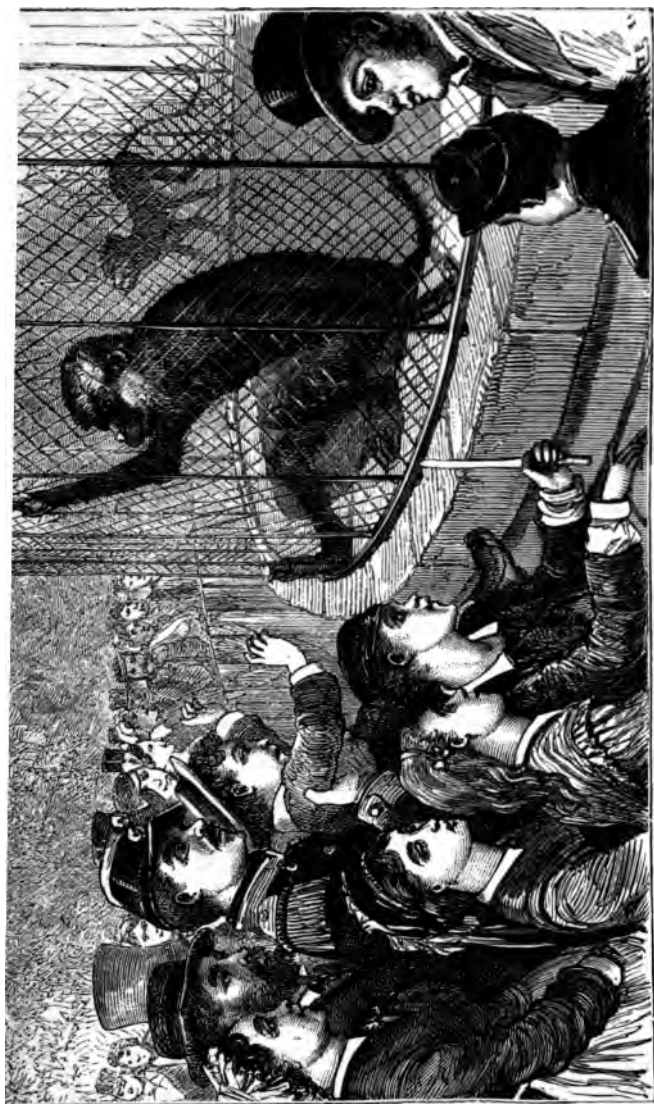
He, too, would get quite excited over his own performances, and after having imitated the faces of all those he chose to mimic, he would begin making grimaces of so terrible and strange a nature, that I would be seized with horror. It seemed to me as if it could not be Montézuma standing before me: that

fantastic and hideous face that I beheld—now furious, now jeering, and now surely the face of some strange animal—could no longer be his ; and, almost beside myself with fear, I trembled all over. Then I used to have a sort of hysterical fit, crying and laughing at once, and I would implore of Montézuma not to do it any more. And he would then have his own natural face again in a moment, and taking me up, kiss me heartily.

In time, these performances which frightened me so dreadfully, yet which I could not help asking Montézuma constantly to repeat, had the effect of putting the strangest ideas into my head about the similarity of the human and animal physiognomy. I began to discover, from this time, different and strange expressions in the faces of the animals that I happened to meet with. In some I would read a threatening or spiteful expression, in others an expression of mockery or fun, which they, of course, never really wore.

I remember, in particular, one of the monkeys in the Jardin des Plantes, who, as a monkey

was singularly ugly, and as a greedy monkey, showed singular eagerness to partake of some cakes which we had brought with us. From quite a long way off he saw them, and came towards the bars of his cage at a curious, loose, half-dislocated trot. When we had just reached the cage, and he was within a few paces of us on the other side, he made a sudden spring, and came with a bang against the bars. Oh! how frightened I was! I thought he was jumping into my face! I shut my eyes in terror, and when I opened them, there he was close to me, and I saw him rolling his eyes and grinding his teeth, and grinning at me. I thought I had never seen so spiteful a face! I dreamed of him that night; and the impression left upon my mind by the sight of that horrid monkey was so strong, that three years afterwards, I actually—before my father, of whom I stood in some awe—was seized with nervous terror at the sight of an ugly little neighbour, who stood at his window opposite, making faces at me, and putting out his tongue.



"HE MADE A SUDDEN SPRING, AND CAME WITH A BANG AGAINST THE BARS."



XI.

DARING EXPLOITS.

My mother, naturally extremely timid, scarcely ever dared to differ from my father ; but still she bravely took my part when he would attack me too severely on the unfortunate subject of my cowardice. My father would always be softened by her in the end. But as a last protest he would shrug his shoulders and say:—"Very well, my dear ; but pray dress him, then, like a little girl, and set him to work to hem handkerchiefs."

Hem handkerchiefs ! In his eyes this was the most dire insult that could be offered to a coward. But I, who had but little pride in me, I should have been more than contented to be turned into a girl, and sit and hem handkerchiefs. I should in that case never have to leave my mother, and I should not have the disagreeable prospect of college looming in the future.

I had a great love of dolls ; my mother and I used to make up the most delightful rag dolls together. I used generally to hide them most carefully away when I had finished playing with them. Sometimes, though, I



had the misfortune to leave one about : my father, then finding it, would turn and twist it with the end of his cane ; wearing on his face, the while, an expression of the greatest contempt. Then — with a dexterity which I should have admired if it had not been exer-

cised at the expense of my poor doll—he would toss it up into the air and send it flying, with a twist of his cane, right out of the window.

My paternal love for my outraged child would then seem to give me some courage—for I had to brave more than one danger to recover my dolly. If the doll fell in the street I would fly downstairs, and opening the hall-door a little way, put my head out to reconnoitre, and—after being quite sure that there were no carriages in sight to drive over me and crush me, nor curs to run after me and bite me, nor boys about to pelt me with peas out of their popguns—I risked it, and recovering my treasure from the street, would retreat, breathless and excited, at the idea of dangers which I *might* have met with.

If the doll happened to fall into the garden, I would first go and look out of the kitchen window—for from there I could see the goings and comings of a certain little bantam-cock belonging to us. This funny little fowl, which was no bigger than my two fists, was of a

most quarrelsome disposition. Directly he saw me coming he would run up as fast as he could, and then standing right in front of me, firmly planted on his two horrid little feet, he would stare at me, turning his head from side to side, first with the right eye and then with the left, twitching his little comb about with rapid jerks. Why did he come? What did he want with me? I had never done anything to him! Had he only then discovered, like others, that I was a coward, and merely amused himself (being a facetious sort of fowl) by making me afraid of him?

When he was at the bottom of the garden, occupied with his own affairs in some corner, I would seize the opportunity, and gliding softly, softly to where my dolly lay, I would carry it off in triumph before he had time to follow me. Sometimes though, he would only pretend to be pre-occupied, and in reality watch me out of the corner of his wicked little eyes, and suddenly shoot out from his corner right up to the door, when I, scarcely outside as yet, would make a rapid and ignominious

retreat inside the house again. Sometimes I have made as many as ten ineffectual attempts to get out at the door, without counting the various stratagems which I was obliged to have recourse to when once outside before I could recover my lost property.

XII.

THE INTOLERANCE OF THE LITTLE BANTAM.

WHEN I did not play with my dolls, I made little chapels and altars in all the corners of the house. I made myself a chasuble out of my mother's apron, and I sang away, as loudly as ever I could, all the hymns I knew by heart, and many that I composed for the occasion. My father said nothing to this, because he thought that, after all, a child must amuse itself in some way; however, I generally chose the days when he was out, and my *grands services* took place always when he went out fishing. On those days I felt I was free, gay,

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and happy. I sang my most beautiful anthems, composed of any words that came into my head, terminating in *us* or *um*; and the house resounded with the noise of my bell.

But the procession, consisting of myself alone, did not go beyond the different rooms and the kitchen. I did not go into the loft, because who ever heard of a grand imposing ceremony taking place in a loft? I would, however, have gladly gone into the garden to ask a blessing upon our rose trees, and the one apricot tree which grew there, but which never had any apricots on it; only the notorious intolerance of that little bantam-cock prevented the procession venturing out of doors.

When I met my mother, as I marched about the passages in pomp, she would smile kindly at me, and kiss me as I passed. Then I would whisper in her ear, "Mamma, I should like to be a priest."

"And why not, my darling," would be her reply, "if it is your vocation?"

XIII.

HAVE I A VOCATION ?

ONE day when my father came home from fishing he went into the kitchen, where my mother was making some cakes, and remained there talking earnestly with her for some time. While this conversation was going on I appeared upon the scene dressed up in my surplice, for I was just in the middle of one of my grandest processions. As I was about to enter the kitchen I was rooted to the spot by these words, which I heard proceeding from my father's lips.

“ You say, my dear, that he talks of becoming a priest : the fact is he knows neither what he is talking about nor what he wishes. You must not suppose that because a child arranges little chapels in the corners of rooms, pretends he is joining in a religious procession, and wears his mother's apron as a surplice, that he is therefore fitted to be a priest when he grows

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up. You might just as well say that a boy must become a soldier because he puts a feather in his cap and plays the drum all day; and then," he went on in a melancholy tone of voice, "Paul would certainly be a worthy priest to offer to God's service! Priest, do you say?" Then exclaimed my father bitterly, "No; a priest, like a soldier, must ever be ready to sacrifice his own life. A priest must think nothing of danger or suffering, if he incurs either for the good of others! A priest must be ready at any hour of the day or night to visit and solace those dying from pestilence. However contagious an illness may be, no priest may shrink from visiting those stricken down with it, at the risk of his own life. Do you think Paul has a vocation for this?"

My mother hung her head and said nothing. Alas! what could she have said? My father's words were wise indeed. As for me, I stood motionless in the shadow of the dark corridor, with my little bell in my hand. I listened to all that was said, standing there too distressed to remember that I ought not to listen to my

father and mother's conversation when they were unconscious of my presence.

"You see, my dear," my father continued in a more gentle voice, "a man requires courage in whatever position he may be placed and in whatever profession he may choose. But the duty of a priest is to give others courage when they fail in it, and how can he do that if he is wanting in it himself? He must set others the example. No, our boy is less fitted to be a priest than anything else; for a priest *must* be courageous, and his courage must be of the highest order. But mind, I would not, for anything in the world, prevent our unfortunate son from following his vocation, if he really had one. I will not deny that I had hoped he might become a soldier, because I was one myself; but alas! I have had to give up that hope." And he repeated slowly, in a sad tone of voice, "Yes, I have given it up!"

The bell fell from my hand: at the noise it made, both my father and mother turned round and discovered me. "Ah! you are there," said my father, looking sadly at me. "It is as

well, perhaps, that you heard what I said. At all events it is said, and you have heard it. However, I did not intend you should do so, my poor boy!" he exclaimed as he kissed my forehead. "But you will understand some day why I have at times seemed severe with you."

"Kiss papa," said my mother, "and try to remember what you have heard. You are very young, you have time to profit by his words. You may yet do better. I am pleased with his progress in his lessons," she went on, addressing my father in a conciliatory tone, "I have taught him all I can, he knows as much as I do."

XIV.

AN ANXIOUS QUESTION HAPPILY SETTLED.

THESE words of my mother, intended to settle matters happily, at once raised another cloud on my horizon.

"Well then," answered my father, "if you have taught him all you can, we must send him to college. Now then, little man, don't let me see your nose turn white."

College! word odious to my ears, and terrible to my imagination. Robert Boissot, was he not at college? I could judge from this sample of a schoolboy how horrid all the rest must be. What awful things had that boy told me about his companions, who set their masters at nought and fought such terrible fights that they almost tore each other to pieces. At this fearful thought I instinctively put up my hand to my nose. If I took that poor nose to school, should I ever bring it back again?

My mother sighed as she answered my father. "I have thought, dear, that it would be hard upon our boy to send him at once to college. The college boys are so rough and inclined to bully the little ones: you see, too, Paul has really not been accustomed to play with boys at all."

"And whose fault is that?" said my father.

"I know, I know," answered my poor mother; "but all I would say is, don't you think it would be better to send him first to Miss Porquet's school? It is so near us; there are not many pupils, and nearly all are younger than Paul. Miss Porquet is very gentle and at the same time very firm. And the boys at that school are not always having those dreadful quarrels and fights which they have at the college. She teaches Latin to several of the children, for instance to one little boy whose mother I know, and who told me yesterday that he was getting on extremely well."

"Very well," replied my father, "let us settle it so, that he goes to Miss Porquet's school first. And now, my poor little Paul, you must try to be brave. Fight against this terrible cowardice. Little by little, if you struggle hard, you will be able to overcome your foolish fears. If you try each day to be a little more courageous, you will at length find you are as brave as anyone else. Things don't come all at once. It is only by striving hard

that you can acquire a virtue or overcome a weakness."

I promised my father to do all I could to overcome my cowardice. My mother kissed me fondly in the passage and whispered in my ear, "Poor darling!"

XV.

A PROJECTED BATTLE.

I WENT to bed that night with the best intentions in the world, and with my head resting on the pillow I formed thousands of projects, one more daring than the other, so that I might show my parents how much I loved them and how hard I tried to please them. When my mother came up to tuck me into my little bed, as she did every night, and stooped over me to kiss me, I threw my arms round her neck and drawing her quite close whispered in her ear: "I do so love you!"

“Darling little fellow!” she answered, resting her cheek against mine.

I was so excited that I could not go to sleep for a long time. I kept turning over in my mind a most daring project, a most audacious



deed which I was determined to perform. Yes, I was determined I would walk into the garden the next day and beard the little bantam-cock. How surprised he would be to see me come up to him without the least fear. Ah! it would be his turn to be afraid now.

Yes, I would just open the door leading from the corridor, open it quite wide ! then I would walk up to the apricot tree : walk straight up to it without hurrying, or trembling. Then he would come up to me ; I should just appear as if I did not see he was there. Then what would he do ? He would most likely fly at me. Very well, let him ; but I would raise my hand at the moment he began his attack, and I would give him such a blow with my fist that he would not forget it in a hurry. But then, perhaps he would give me a terrible peck, the vicious little horror ! Pooh, what of that ? I could easily prevent it !

Having come to this conclusion, I at last fell asleep. My plan was to get up early the next morning without making any noise ; to go downstairs and into the garden before anyone was about, for I did not wish people to witness my exploit. I was determined to try if I could not carry my project out with courage and success ; but I could not be quite sure how matters would turn out, so I would rather have my first battle over without a witness.

When I opened my eyes the next morning, it was broad daylight. I jumped out of bed, said my prayers, and dressed as fast as I could.

XVI.

MY PROJECT IS DEFERRED.

FROM the staircase, down which I bounded two or three steps at a time, I could hear the cock-a-doodle-doo of my enemy. His shrill voice seemed to pierce through one's head, it was such a self-satisfied, such a confident tone of voice, that as I listened I seemed to hesitate in my design of bearding the little cock. However, after a moment I regained my courage, and I said to him—just as if he could hear me,—“Hollo, Mr. Cock, in five minutes you won't hold your cockscomb quite so high!”

As valour need not altogether exclude prudence, I thought it wise to take my father's



"THE DOCTOR STARED AT MY NOSE."

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fishing-rod with me. And I drew my cap well down over my eyes.

As I entered the kitchen I found my mother already there ; she was engaged in picking lentils and removing the little pebbles which clung to them.

“Are you going out fishing?” she asked laughingly.

“No, mamma, I was only going—” Then it occurred to me that I had determined I would not tell anybody of my audacious project—that my intended victory over the bantam was to be a profound secret until I was the undoubted conqueror. I bit my tongue and prudently cut the sentence short. As I never told a lie, I did not give a word of explanation.

“Put down the fishing-rod,” said my mother without paying any attention to my evident embarrassment ; “take off your cap, and come and help me.”

I hastened to obey her, and, to tell the truth, I am ashamed to say I felt some satisfaction in putting off for a day or two, the duty, which

I had imposed upon myself, of teaching a lesson to that impudent little cock. He, in the meantime, seemed to crow over my infirmity of purpose, for his cock-a-doodle-doo sounded more loudly than ever all over the place, "Ah!" said I to myself, "you will lose nothing by waiting; you would certainly have caught it by this time, I can tell you, if I had not been kept in." At that moment my mother went out of the kitchen.

Instigated by a feeling of curiosity to see what was going on inside the kitchen—or, perhaps, with a baser motive of crowing over me, the little bantam suddenly flew on the ledge outside the kitchen window, and putting his head first on one side, and then the other, looked impertinently through the panes of glass into the kitchen.

"Take that!" cried I; and seizing a handful of lentils, I threw them against the window. It sounded like a shower of hail. The bantam gave a hoarse scream of terror, flapped his wings, and disappeared. The rascal, I have not a doubt, paid the chickens off for the fright

I caused him, as I heard them uttering piercing cries soon afterwards.

I carefully picked up the lentils, and set to work cleaning them again, feeling quite pleased with my exploit.

XVII.

SCIENTIFIC REFLECTIONS ON MY NOSE MADE BY DR. LOMBALOT.

"THAT is very nicely done," said my mother, on her return to the kitchen. "You are a good helpful little boy; and now go and put on your best suit for breakfast, as somebody is coming."

This somebody was Dr. Lombalot, the old surgeon-major of my father's former regiment. When he retired from the army he settled at Tours. He was to arrive by an early train.

"He is a great original," said my mother, "but your father likes him very much."

He was indeed an original! He had all sorts of theories upon various subjects and systems of doing things, which he always made out must be right. For instance, he never ate a boiled egg like the rest of the world, and he proved that the rest of the world was wrong in the way it ate them. "Omelettes, yes, Ma'am, omelettes," said he, looking at my mother across the breakfast table, "omelettes ought to be done in a certain particular way known only to myself; but I am willing to give the receipt"—here he made a little bow to my mother,—“and you should *always* pour in the oil before the vinegar in making a salad,”—here he twinkled his eye maliciously at my father, who was mixing a salad, and had just poured in the vinegar first.

One of his theories was, he informed us, that neither men nor boys should wear braces. And then he announced that people should always walk upstairs backwards, so as not to get out of breath. Here I unfortunately swallowed some coffee the wrong way, and choked myself, because I was bursting with

laughter; the doctor wiped his spectacles, and putting them on, stared at my nose, which I felt turn pale.

“And phrenology?” said my father hastily, wishing to divert his attention, “you still study phrenology?”

The doctor did not appear to hear the question, his eyes were fixed on my unfortunate nose. At last he uttered the words “*Remarkably* strange!”

“What is strange?” enquired my father. The doctor did not at once reply: lifting up his right hand, he held it before him, moving it first further and then nearer to him, as if he was trying to get an exact point of sight to suit him. When he held it still, the back was towards me, and it hid half his face. His eyes peeped over it as if he was looking over a wall or as if he was plunged in water to the tip of his nose.

We all gazed at him in great surprise and some consternation. As for him, he quietly continued his operations, figuratively pulling me to pieces: his eyes became quite small,

and puckers and wrinkles appeared at the corners.

“Not the least affinity,” said he, in a few seconds, “between the different features in that face. I take the nose” (here he made a sort of telescope with his closed fist), “a war-like nose! I hide it” (he hid himself again behind his wall until I saw only his two eyes), “and I see a meek forehead, and a timid eye. I look at them altogether again” (here the wall disappeared), “and what a strange contrast is before me! That martial nose and that timid physiognomy! that poor face! which is quite ashamed to have such a nose attached to it, a nose almost What was I going to say? however, no matter. It is just as if you saw a gentle, peaceable, good-natured shop-keeper giving his arm in the street to some violent, insolent blusterer. Absurd contrast! a caricaturist would be delighted to meet with that boy!”

“But,” said my father impatiently, “do tell us something about phrenology!”

XVIII.

I DISCOVER THAT I DO NOT POSSESS THE
BUMP OF COMBATIVENESS.

THE doctor looked grave as he answered:
“My dear Bicquerot, if you ask that question seriously, I will reply. But if you are only joking, pray don’t do so any more. It is too serious a subject to laugh at.”

My father having declared that he was not joking at all, the doctor looked round him in a suspicious manner and lowered his voice as he said, “I have discovered things that would make your hair stand on end if I disclosed them to you. I have discovered a real science, an infallible science——”

“Then,” said my father, “do you seriously believe that our character and destiny in the world depend upon the form and size of the bumps on our skulls?”

“Yes, I do believe it,” answered the doctor with the air of a resigned and misunderstood

genius, as he folded his hands in front of him. "Yes, I do believe it: O Bicquerot!" he repeated.

"Well, I confess," began my father.

"Thirty years' experiences, thirty years of study and researches, have I spent!" cried the doctor, "and have at last found the truth! Here, read this,"—he felt in the side pocket of his coat and pulled out a yellow pamphlet—"read this, I say, and the scales will drop from your eyes."

"However, doctor, look here," my father again tried to begin.

It was the doctor's turn to become impatient. "It is not a question of *However!* it is not a question of *Doctor!* It is not a question of *Look here!* at all," he exclaimed. "Truth is truth. Let me feel the head of the first comer, I will tell him: 'Sir, you have such and such a bump. Very well, you will do such and such a thing; you will not be able to help it. You who have the bump of *murder*, you will be a *murderer*. Science declares *that you must become a murderer!*' But he answers me: 'I have

always been a quiet, peaceable man; I have lived for fifty years in the world and have never hurt anyone yet, not even a fly!’ ‘Never mind, my friend,’ I say; ‘in two years, in ten years, you will be a *murderer*! and if you die without being one, remember that you would have been one, only you had no opportunity.’”

“Oh, come! that’s too much!” cried my mother, scandalized and shocked.

“Well, madame, perhaps I exaggerate a little, but it is in order that you may understand me better,” and the doctor proceeded to tell us many extraordinary things which I did not in the least understand, and which made my mother very indignant and my father discontented. He went on laying down the law, without attending to any remarks or objections made by his listeners; at last he finished up a long confused rigmarole with the following words:—

“Now, madame, be good enough to look at your husband’s head. If you look, you will see on each side of the head, just above the

ear, a large protuberance. This is the bump of combativeness, of *courage*, or, if you like it better, heroism. Very well, madame, that same bump is to be found on all the old Roman heads. When you next go to Paris,



go to the Louvre, and notice the Roman busts and statues there, and you will see I am right. Whoever has that bump, if he was hatched by a chicken, brought up amongst hares, and nourished all his life upon nothing but pap, would yet be a brave

man, everywhere, and always. Let who may say the reverse."

I instinctively put up my hand to my head to feel in the place indicated by the doctor. Alas! in place of a bump I discovered a deep hollow! I felt quite ill! the doctor's words sounded like a distant and indistinct rumble. I felt the sort of despair that a sick man experiences when, thinking he is recovering, having been buoyed up by the hopeful words of friends, all his hopes are dashed to the ground by some brutal doctor who tells him, without any preparation, that his case is hopeless and he must die.

XIX.

THE BANTAM CEASES TO TROUBLE ME.

I WENT out of the room as soon as I could do so without being remarked. My mother soon came after me.

"Isn't Doctor Lombalot a real original?"

said she, trying to smile, "but one must not believe all he says, you know. You see, neither your Papa nor I believe him, dear; and he was very wrong and very rude to say those things about you, which could only annoy you. But do not trouble about it, my darling boy."

I could not say I did not trouble about the doctor's unkind remarks, for in truth I troubled greatly about them. That shows how careful grown-up people should be in the things they say before children, who cannot as yet distinguish what is false or exaggerated, from what is just and true.

The next morning, I felt so upset that I was really unequal to undertake my famous expedition against the little cock. It was again a deferred project, a battle put off until the following day.

On that following day, I went down stairs with my mother, and, going to the door which led into the yard where the chickens were kept, I opened it wide and looked out. I saw only the hens and chickens, which were clucking

and scratching away on the ground. I gathered courage, and walked outside with a firm step: I walked through the yard into the garden where the roses grew and the apricot tree stood.

There a great surprise awaited me! For there in a corner lay the little bantam cock on his back with his two little legs straight up in the air. He was quite dead: he had probably been seized with apoplexy, caused by his violent temper and excessive gluttony. The other fowls, with culpable indifference, were pecking about quite as usual, apparently not wasting a single thought or sigh on the memory of the defunct.

"A good riddance!" said I with a sigh of relief. And that was the only funeral speech that was made at the demise of the impertinent little bantam.

From that day I took possession of garden and yard. My mother remarked that I had taken a sudden fancy for building little cottages with pieces of slate and tile, and that I was always outside at work, in the yard. My

enemy was replaced by a large rooster; very tall, sullen of aspect, and also extremely cowardly. He never ventured to trouble me in my architectural studies.

Thus ended the great trial which was to have decided which was the better warrior, the bantam or myself, and which trial was to put my courage to the test. Things were now really left as they were, for the trial of strength never came off, by reason of the little cock's untimely death. But, to tell the truth, in my heart of hearts, I was not sorry that the intended passage of arms with my fierce little antagonist did not take place.

XX.

MISS PORQUET'S SCHOOL.

IN the following October I became one of Miss Porquet's pupils. Nothing remarkable occurred on my entrance into the school except that my cheeks became crimson and my nose



“A GREAT BOY OF ELEVEN, RATHER A STUPID FELLOW.”

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very white while Miss Porquet put me through a sort of preparatory examination.

All the other scholars stared at me, as was only natural ; and I could not help thinking, as they eagerly listened to the answers I made to Miss Porquet's questions, that they were laughing at me, which indeed I believe to have been the case.

Miss Porquet declared herself satisfied with my replies, and told me that I should at once go into the first class, which, as well as the second, was under her own tuition. The third class was composed of children of various ages, from boys of seven to babies of three.

The third class was taken care of, petted, scolded, and taught and amused by two of Miss Porquet's sisters. Now those babies in the third class were the very children that I dreaded most, their astonishment at my unfortunate nose was so unfeigned that it seemed like impudence.

The first class consisted of five pupils including myself. There was, first of all, a great boy of eleven, rather a stupid fellow ; he had

the figure of a young man, and the knowledge of a mere baby. For three years he had been struggling with the rudiments of Latin; and he might, indeed, as well have struggled a little with the rudiments of his own language, for he could scarcely spell a single word correctly. His parents, who were rich, and very fond of travelling, did not know what to do with their stupid boy, so they left him to the care of Miss Porquet.

He had the greatest aversion to books of all kinds, but he took the greatest pride in fine clothes, bright coloured neckties, etc.; and he wore straps to his trousers. This boy used to hide himself in corners to eat chocolate. He was given the nickname of *The Count* by the other boys.

He came up to me just as we were going into the playground, and said point blank, "My name is Arthur de la Croulle!" (he evidently thought this a very fine name) "and what is your name?"

"My name is Paul Bicquerot," I replied. *He made a face of disgust, and gave me to*

understand that he thought Bicquerot a vulgar name. I never doubted but that he must be right; but I felt very sad, both on account of my parents and myself!

“My father is very rich” (here he rattled



the money in his pocket), “and yours?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” I answered.

Another face of disgust, more disdainful than the first, followed my reply. He then placed the point of his first finger on the sleeve

of my jacket, which was clean but not new, and he said, with a rude laugh, "Your parents are poor, or you would wear better clothes. I dislike poor people, and so does my mamma."

He then turned on his heel and went off to walk by himself at the other end of the playground. One would have thought that there was not one amongst us rich enough to be admitted to the honour of walking with him.

As for me, I remained stupefied at what he had told me. I had never thought about whether my father and mother were rich or poor. I was rather inclined to think them rich, because they did not go about with a stick and wallet, asking for alms like old Father Chaumont, who came every Friday to beg at our door.

The young Mr. de la Croulle put strange ideas into my head.

XXI.

A FRIEND.—PRISONER'S BASE.

"So *The Count* asked you if you were rich?" said a pretty little boy of about my own age, as he came up to where I was standing; "don't mind what he says, he is a little cracked. Did what he said distress you? Don't cry, there is nothing to cry about; *The Count* doesn't know *what* he says half his time. He always goes off by himself in that grand way, when we first come out to play; but when once we have settled upon a game, and are going to begin, he forgets his straps and other toggery, and plays harder than any of us. Will you play at Prisoner's Base?"

"I don't know the game," I answered.

"No?" said he, in a surprised tone. "Well, I will teach it to you; it's not difficult, you shall be on my side."

I did not dare to refuse the offer which was so kindly made, and yet I scarcely dared to

accept it. My new friend, however, who was full of spirit and fun, cut short my excuses, and, taking me by the hand, led me off. As we walked across the playground he informed me that his name was Marc Sublaine, and that his father was the president of the local tribunal.

In enlisting me on his side he had made but a sorry recruit ; and in the beginning his comrades did not scruple to tell him so. I utterly ignored all the rules of the game : I rushed blindly about, without the least method. I allowed myself to be made prisoner like a goose ; and, once prisoner, I began to think of something else, instead of trying to escape, and holding out my hand to my comrades to help me. Once, when I was near making a prisoner—just on the point, in fact, of catching him—the boy, who felt he would be caught directly, turned and ran after me ; when I, stupidly afraid of him, ran off as fast as I could amid shouts of laughter from both sides.

Once I forgot which side I belonged to. Each cried out, “ Here, here ! this way ! ” and

I ran first to one, and then the other, bewildered and in such a state of agitation that I nearly gave up the game. If I had done so I should have lost the good opinion of my playfellows for ever.

Fortunately just about this time the clock struck, and the two sides mingled together to go into school. I feared that I should be reproached for being so stupid and playing so badly; but the boys had laughed merrily at me and felt no ill-will towards me. Marc put his arm through mine; he smiled at me, it was with good nature and no desire to tease me. I felt I loved this kind boy with all my heart; and at the same time I felt very sorry that I had behaved so ridiculously while playing; for I feared he must despise me.

"I am afraid you must think me very silly?" I said timidly.

"Very silly? why should I?" he answered kindly. "Not at all. You didn't know the game and you made mistakes; that was all. One can't do things all at once: one must learn how to do them. But I will tell you

what I noticed when we were playing, and that was that you are a very good tempered boy."

I reddened with pleasure, and without thinking that my request might appear sudden and strange, I said to him, "Will you be my friend?" and I held out my hand to him.

He took it, and looking in my face, smiled again, and simply said:—"I should like it very much."

I cast a look of triumph in *The Count's* direction; but unfortunately his back was turned towards me.

XXII.

STUDIES.—SCHOOLBOY TALK.

WITH what ardour I attacked my Latin! How anxious I was to show the boys, and Marc above all, that although I might be stupid at playing Prisoner's Base, I was not stupid at my lessons.

Marc recited the best in the class, and I felt

as much pleasure at his doing so as if I had been the first in the class myself. I came out second, to my great joy. The others stammered through their lessons somehow; as for *The Count* he could scarcely decline a noun correctly. But after all, what could be expected, when all study time was spent by him in making paper boxes for chocolate, and writing on them his names in full, the place and date of his birth, and his present address; or else in making little scales with cotton and pieces of paper, in which he weighed flies, wafers and little bits of feather cut from the quill pens,—while the rest of us were busy humming over our lessons to ourselves, with our thumbs pressed into our ears.

When I returned home in the evening I spoke of nothing but my new friend, and the pleasure I had had in playing at Prisoner's Base. I kept to myself the unpleasant and disparaging remarks made by *The Count*. I was happy, animated and chatty. My father looked at me with an expression of good-natured curiosity and my mother smiled. I explained

to them, at great length, but without the least clearness, the rules of Prisoner's Base, talking exactly as if it was a new game just invented; as if no one had ever heard of it before, and as if my father had never been a schoolboy. It is one of the peculiarities of childhood to think that the world begins with themselves, and to wish to explain everything from beginning to end to grown-up people. My excitement seemed quite to change my nature, habits and disposition. I kept interrupting the conversation by saying in a loud tone, "*He* told me this," or "*he* did that," the *he* being in each instance my new friend Marc.

My father was most kind and considerate that evening in making allowance for my excitement and enthusiasm, and never once said that children should not bore grown-up people with their foolish chatter. On the contrary he rather encouraged me and exchanged glances of satisfaction with my mother. Ah, that was a happy evening!

XXIII.

A DREADFUL ADVENTURE.

THE more I saw of Marc the better I liked him. Every day I respected and admired him more. I secretly made him the model which I did all I could to copy. In every situation which troubled and puzzled me in my character of school-boy, I would ask myself the question, "Now in my place what would Marc do?" and that decided me.

One night when my father was reading his newspaper in the dining-room, I sat beside my mother talking quietly to her, and, as was my wont, extolling my hero Marc: for the hundredth time did I draw his picture in vivid word-painting for my mother's edification. She listened as usual and smiled. Presently I noticed that she began looking about her as if she had lost something. She searched in her work-basket, on the floor, in the table drawers, and at last she tapped her forehead

and said: "To be sure! I remember now, I must have left them in the garden."

"What is it, mamma?" I asked.

"My scissors; I went into the garden this afternoon and was working there. I must have left them on the bench, or perhaps they fell under it."

She turned to go out of the room; as she did so I followed softly, and without her seeing me I opened the door which led from the corridor into the garden and went out. It was very dark. I saw little squares of light thrown through the kitchen window on the gravel; and that seemed to be the only light I could see anywhere. There was no moon, and no stars. I hesitated for a moment, one moment only, and then I said to myself, "What would Marc do? He would go and find his mother's scissors, I am sure; I will go then: yes, I will certainly go." But as I made an uncertain and trembling step forward, my courage almost forsook me: it seemed as if it was not I walking there in the dark. I *heard* the loud beating of my heart, each throb

was painful! I heard a surging in my ears and I held my breath involuntarily. All sorts of vague forms floated before my eyes. Something, surely, moved amongst the dead leaves to the right, I thought. I passed by quickly. But something is surely stealing along at the top of the wall to the left? Here I stopped, and waited a moment. What could it be? Something, I felt certain, was watching me, following every movement! However, on I went, and arrived at last, more dead than alive, at the wooden seat under the large cherry-tree. I passed my hand rapidly over the seat—no! the scissors were not there. "They must, then, be upon the ground," said I to myself, and I said again, in a whisper, "What is easier than to pick them up? I must of course feel for them under the seat. Of course I must pick them up."

It was very easy to talk of picking them up; but *how* was I to do it? If I stooped, surely that *mysterious something* that had certainly been stealthily following me, would pounce out upon my back. And if it should be hidden

behind the seat! If it should jump into my face! Horrible! Then, too, what a dreadful feeling it would be to pass one's hand over the earth without being able to see what one touched! who could tell what dirty, horrible, slimy and cold creature I might not come in contact with? Without trying to invent any new monster to terrify myself with, supposing a *toad* should touch my hand!

But I now remembered Marc, and I determined I would be worthy of his friendship. In desperation I stooped suddenly and placed my hand on the gravel under the seat. I uttered a piercing cry and lost consciousness.

XXIV.

DON'T LET MARC KNOW.

WHEN I recovered my senses I found myself lying in my bed; my father and mother were standing at the side of it, and our doctor was holding my hand.



"I UTTERED A PIERCING CRY."

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“The serpent ! the serpent !” were my first words.

Dr. Brissaud looked at my father, who said a few words to him in a low tone. My head felt so weak that I seemed to hear his voice from a long distance ; I succeeded, however, in distinguishing these words : “ He went into the garden without a light to look for his mother’s scissors, and in feeling for them he must have put his hand on a coil of rope used for hanging up the linen to dry, and which was left under the garden seat.” Upon that, I went off to sleep.

I kept my bed for a long time after this, for I was very ill. I was continually having dreams and fancies, in which all the fantastic and horrid creatures conjured up by Montézuma were perpetually playing a part. Always the same : Croquemitaine, the Colonel’s horse, the monkey in the Jardin des Plantes, the little boy who lived opposite who put out his tongue at me, Montézuma himself and Dr. Lombalot, who both made faces at me, and, at last, that dreadful serpent that I had, in fancy, touched

with my hand. As the creatures of my imagination would torment me more and more, I would fall to shaking and shivering all over, my poor father standing pale by my bedside, and my mother crying. Then, as they caressed me, I would implore them "not to tell Marc; not let Marc know that I was a coward!"

In saying this, I was not just to myself, I can see that now. I had really displayed great courage; and, under the influence of the best feeling, I had obliged my poor little trembling body to obey my will. Only, in a moment of great excitement, I had trusted too much to my strength and it had failed me. I had attempted too much. If I had not been so determined, if I had only asked advice, I should not have imposed upon myself a task so terribly severe to me. To brave unknown dangers in the dark was too great a trial for my nature to attempt all at once. I should have begun more gradually to overcome my fears, and then I should not have failed so sadly.

Indeed, after this adventure, I was, for a

long time, in a worse state of mind than I had ever been before.

XXV.

“THE BOY WHO HAS BEEN SO ILL.”

THE snow was on the ground and the ponds all frozen when I was well enough to return to school. I was warmly welcomed by my school-fellows, above all by Marc, who had called to ask after me every day during my illness, although he lived quite at the other end of the town. He looked upon me now with the profoundest interest, blended with affection : that respectful sort of interest which one child feels for another who has been brought near to death.

The Count alone, of all the boys, said nothing kind to me when I first met him on my return to Miss Porquet's. He was too much taken up with arranging a new violet comforter well over his nose, under which comforter he

managed to bury his face and hide himself like a dormouse.

I was too weak at first to join in any violent games ; the boys still played at prisoner's base, and hockey, they made slides, and put snow down one another's backs, much to the horror of poor Miss Porquet. When the sun shone, Marc and I walked together up and down the playground until I was tired. When it was too cold for me to go out, he and I remained indoors and had a game at dominoes or draughts in the schoolroom.

I was quite sure, from Marc's manner to me, that he was ignorant of my terrible secret ; that neither he, nor any of the other boys, knew that I was a coward. My late illness was sufficient excuse for any nervous timidity which I might display on occasions. All went well with me at the school now. If any new pupil who came during that term appeared anxious to make unpleasant remarks respecting the size of my nose or any other peculiarity, he was always stopped at once by the information, " That is the boy who has been so ill." Some

of them indeed seemed to take quite a pride in themselves that they numbered amongst them a boy who had been so very ill. What will not people be proud of ?

XXVI.

MARC'S FRIENDSHIP FOR ME.

MARC was extremely, and deservedly, popular amongst his schoolfellows ; and, as I was his particular friend, some of his popularity was reflected upon me.

That I had been attracted by him the first day I saw him was not extraordinary ; for he won, even at first sight, every one's sympathy. Besides, had he not held out his hand to me that first day when he saw me in trouble ? and did I not owe it to him that I had escaped the jokes and bullying which new boys generally get inflicted upon them ?

But he, why did he like me ? Perhaps for the simple reason that I loved him so, and

that I required his friendship ; his heart was so generous and kind !

At any rate, thanks to him, I found out what it was to be the friend of one who was thought so highly of. I was respected because



he liked me, and I felt that I grew better by being so much with him.

When spring came round, and the cock-chafers began to buzz among the linden trees, more than one of those unfortunate insects would be roughly seized by the wing, and

passed from the hand which held it captive down the back of some timid young scholar. Then the most appalling shrieks would be heard from the frightened boy, accompanied by yells of joy and shouts of laughter from the perpetrator of the mischief. As for me the very idea of having a cockchafer put down my neck made me shudder all over. Miss Porquet, who was rather nervous herself, was very angry when the boys played this trick, but she could not stop it.

The Count, in spite of his pomposity, often came in for this disagreeable practical joke. He would then fly to his desk and write off to his mother. Whether the letters went I know not ; but it was his great resource on these occasions. Now, fortunately for me, no one dreamt of putting a cockchafer down the neck of Marc Sublaine's particular friend.

As things went so smoothly in play-hours I was all the better able to devote myself to my studies, and tackled my Latin grammar with the better will for having my mind at ease.

At the close of that summer I remember the boys adopted a very disagreeable method of teasing one another. It lasted for about a week, just when the furze bushes were covered with burs. And while the fancy lasted, the teasing was incessant. Everywhere—in the playground, at study-time, under Miss Porquet's very eyes—handfuls of burs used to be cast by anonymous hands, like harpoons by a whaler, on the innocent heads of unsuspecting boys. The heads chosen were always those covered with the thickest or curliest hair. And the victim would sometimes have to pass an hour in grumbling and complaining, while he disentangled the odious burs from his head; often pulling out handfuls of hair as he did so. This trick was never played on me; that I was spared, I knew well I owed to Marc.

XXVII.

PLANS FOR THE HOLIDAYS.

THE holidays drew near, and Marc and I formed the most delightful plans for passing part of them together. It was arranged that I should pass a week with him and his parents at their country house, Bois-Clair. This was situated almost on the borders of the beautiful forest at Loches, and at a short distance from the meadows watered by the river Indre. I already knew something of Bois-Clair, for I had passed a happy half-holiday there. But this time, only to think ! what happiness ! I was to spend a whole week there.

And yet my joy was not entirely without alloy. For I thought of the forest. We should of course go there to gather wild flowers and berries ; that would be delightful ! But if we met with wolves, boars, robbers, or snakes ! Besides in a forest there would be

sure to be thickets so obscure, so dark and terrible, that it made me ill to think of them. It is true we would fish in the little streams for cray-fish, that would be very nice! but supposing the cray-fish were to pinch our



fingers with their claws! or supposing we found adders instead of cray-fish, or perhaps frogs! horrid frogs which are so like toads! Yes, but we would go to the banks of the river and fish for gudgeon. Ah! but suppose the bank gave way—as really happened once to my father—and we should be plunged in

the Indre, which is over three feet deep quite in-shore.

Marc spoke of all these chances with a smile on his lips, and such perfect confidence in all turning out well, that I began to feel reassured. I began to think that courage was contagious. Not that I can say that I was courageous, that I had courage myself—alas ! far from it, I knew I could not trust myself to be brave. But it seemed as if I somehow so trusted in Marc that his courage did for both of us.

If I had dared to tell him how really frightened I was about many things, he would have made me happy by telling me at once something I only learnt by chance in conversation, and that was that François would be with us wherever we went. François was his father's servant : an old soldier and a worthy man.

XXVIII.

THE PROSPECT OF GOING TO COLLEGE.

IN the distance, however, beyond this happy holiday-time, there loomed a dark shadow: the time was drawing on when I should have to go to college. Now certain traditions which I had heard at Miss Porquet's school represented the college as a sort of anticipation of the lower regions; where, from morning to night, the small and weak suffered from the tyranny of the strong. Amongst the *Porquets* (for so the pupils of Miss Porquet were called) those who were of an adventurous and daring spirit, looked forward calmly, if not eagerly, to their college life—at least so some of them said—and to prepare themselves for it, wore their caps all on one side, and already talked the particular college slang. Others less courageous, waited the fatal moment of their removal from Miss Porquet's care to the dangers of college life with fear and trembling.

I was of that number. Some of the timid young Porquets having left the school, and actually, as it were, standing on the threshold of the college, drew back when on the very edge of the precipice, and obtained their parents' consent to pass another year under the protecting wing of the amiable Miss Porquet.

Marc was to go to college at the same time as I did. He was not one of those who wore his cap on one side or who talked slang, and he did not boast that he would knock down the first collegian who looked scornfully at him. No, Marc was not that sort of boy at all: but on the other hand he had no fears about his college life. This wonderful courage—as it appeared to me—won my greatest admiration. As for him, it was only natural, he thought, to be fearless. And we made our plans together as follows:—

“We will go to college arm in arm,” Marc would say to me sometimes; “we will never be rude or provoke anyone, then it is most likely that nobody will provoke us. But if

they touch us, well, we will defend ourselves, that is all."

XXIX.

AT BOIS-CLAIR.

THE holidays arrived, and Marc and I went off to Bois-Clair. Rare and wonderful thing! that happy time, looked forward to, talked of, and thought of, for so long, fully realised our expectations. We were as happy and enjoyed ourselves in all respects as much, as we had ever dreamed we should. What spirits we were in! We were intoxicated with the splendid air, the freedom, and the constant exercise out-of-doors. We were seldom in the house, for we were so occupied with our important out-door affairs—fishing, gathering wild fruits and flowers, and getting ourselves nearly lost in the grand forest. François was always with us, and always in a good temper, when we went on any long expedition.



"I COULD NOT HEAR TO SEE A COW COMING UP TO ME."

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I became quite enterprising, almost daring, and; except now and then when certain fears assailed me, which however I did my best to conceal, I began to think I was becoming a changed character. One of the drawbacks, though, to my perfect happiness, while staying with Marc, was the constant chance of meeting with cattle. I could not bear to see a cow coming up to me. That was one of my fears. Another cause of trouble was the chance of falling in with sheep-dogs; how I dreaded seeing a flock of sheep grazing in a field, I knew the dogs would be with them, and that if we walked near, they would be sure to come up to us.

And this they always did without fail, and what a moment of anxiety I used to pass when these great, shaggy, dirty animals came running towards us, barking as loudly as they could, staring at us with their great bright eyes. Marc used to speak to them, and somehow he always knew how to quiet them; for at the sound of his voice they would stop barking, and walk off wagging their stumps of tails.

Still, when we had passed them I did not dare to look back for fear they should be coming after us. It always seemed to me that one of them would creep stealthily up behind and grip me. I seemed to feel, sometimes, as if one of the dogs was only a foot behind me, and just about to spring, and then, with a great fear on me, I would turn round suddenly to find, of course, no dog there.

The poor beasts had not wasted another thought on us: they returned to their flocks, after we passed, gently wagging their tails, and stopping now and again to philosophize, with their noses examining a mole-hill.

The turkeys were creatures that I detested, and nothing was more disagreeable to me than meeting them. I was very much afraid of them. I can scarcely give an idea of the effect produced upon me by their little black eyes, which always had an angry glare in them, their frightful wrinkled heads, their great spread-out tails, and drooping wings; there seemed to me to be something hideously *unnatural* always about the turkeys, and when

they advanced towards me, with their ruffled feathers, they appeared to me like some monstrous stuffed beasts, that went on wheels, not living birds walking about. Marc did not seem to notice them, and I never told anyone the dread I had of those turkeys; but when they came near I shrank into a corner, and scarcely breathed until they had passed.

The pigs, too, troubled me not a little. I would willingly have walked a good distance out of my way to avoid passing through the copse where they were turned out. I distrusted their squinting little eyes, which appeared so full of deceit and malice; and I hated the familiarity with which they came up to smell us, simply because they, like us, belonged to the house. I remembered on these occasions all sorts of terrible tales of children having been devoured by pigs. But the coolness and confidence of Marc, in all times of apparent danger, in a little while reassured me.

Little by little—seeing that I was neither bitten, tossed, pecked, nor devoured—I became accustomed to all the objects which at

first caused me so much terror. It is true I did not go in search of them, but I did not fly from them, as I began by doing.

XXX.

ULYSSES MAKES HIS APPEARANCE.

THE day before that on which we were to return to Loches, Marc and I went on to one of the terraces which overlooked the road, to shoot our bows and arrows. All of a sudden Marc cried out, "Hollo! here's Ulysses! what does he come for, I wonder?"

Ulysses was one of the gendarmes belonging to the brigade at Loches. I was leaning on the railing: Ulysses came up to us at a hand gallop.

"Hollo! Ulysses, how d'ye do?" cried Marc.

Ulysses raised his head, looked at us, and nodded. "Is your papa at home?" he asked Marc.

"Yes," answered Marc, "he is."

Off went the gendarme at a trot, and in another minute we saw him turn to the left and enter the great gate of the courtyard of Bois-Clair. When he turned to leave us I



noticed that he carried a small yellow leather bag at his back. I watched it jumping up and down as the horse trotted. Ah! if I had only known what that little yellow bag contained!

François soon came out to tell us that luncheon was ready. When we entered the

courtyard we saw the gendarme's horse tied to one of the chestnut trees. The flies were tormenting him; he kept shaking his head, and giving tremendous kicks with his great iron-shod feet. As we passed him he was frightened, and started, making a tremendous clatter. Off I ran. As I passed the kitchen window, I saw Ulysses at table having dinner.

At luncheon Mr. and Mrs. Sublaine both seemed much pre-occupied; every now and then they spoke together in a low tone of voice. After luncheon Ulysses came into the room, and then Mr. Sublaine told him he should "start to-night instead of to-morrow."

I looked at Marc with surprise, and I saw, by the expression of his face, that he was as much astonished as myself.

As we were leaving the dining-room Mrs. Sublaine told us to make our little arrangements in the way of packing, and so on, for that we were going to leave Bois-Clair that evening. She did not tell us why, but returned to talk to Mr. Sublaine. We were

back again at Loches at eight o'clock that night.

XXXI.

SAD NEWS FOR ME.

THE next day Marc came to see me, and told me that his father was going to Orleans. This news distressed me, I scarcely knew why. I had a presentiment that something terrible would follow. I had seen at Bois-Clair a large letter with a red seal, which laid beside Mr. Sublaine's plate at luncheon. No doubt this had been brought by the gendarme in his little yellow bag. It was owing to that letter, with the red seal, that we had returned to Loches, sooner than was intended. This I felt quite sure of: and also that the same letter caused Mr. Sublaine to hurry off to Orleans. What would come next?

Alas! my fears were but too well founded. The day but one following, when I went to

play with Marc, he told me that his father was appointed to a higher post under government at Orleans.

As Marc told me this, he looked very sad. When he told me, I could scarcely speak. I remember I only answered, "Ah!" It must have seemed very stupid, but I am sure he saw how grieved I was, for he did all he could to comfort me.

Marc's parents were only to go at the beginning of October, so there was still a little time for us to be together, but I only seemed to suffer more in consequence. Each time I saw Marc, my heart seemed to swell with pain at the thought of our parting. I was miserable! how I loved him! he had been so good to me! how handsome he was! alas! should I lose sight of that good, kind face, perhaps for ever!

He tried his best to console me, he promised that he would often write to me, and talked of holidays yet to come that we would pass together at Bois-Clair: and then the blow was *struck*.

XXXII.

I GO TO COLLEGE.—A PUPIL CALLED
BORNQUET.

ON Saturday the third of October, Marc, and the rest of his family went to Orleans. Sunday I spent in tears, and on Monday my father took me to college.

The way to the college was through a very long street, called Pont Street. That Monday was very cold, I remember; an autumnal fog came up from the meadows near and seemed to creep into my bones, and I trembled in every limb.

At every step we met college boys of all ages, who were loitering along in the same direction we were going. They called to one another from a distance, and formed into different groups, from several of which I heard chance words escaping, in which very clear allusions were made to a new boy who had "a fine big nose of his own."

Once within the college grounds the boys prepared to enter school, separating into their different classes. After wandering about for some time, uncertain where to go, I found myself in the middle of a group of boys which opened, with apparent good nature, to let me join them, and then closed round me. Once in the crowd I discovered that the object of each boy seemed to be to push his neighbour down; three times did I advance with the rest to the school door, and each time I was pushed away from it and knocked up against the wall. The fourth attempt was more successful, I was lifted off my legs and borne with the crowd into school, where, half crushed and quite out of breath, I managed to stumble on to one of the nearest benches.

As I took my school-books one by one out of my satchel, my neighbour jogged my elbow, and so threw them down; and the professor, looking sternly at me, begged that I would not "make so much noise."

He asked the names of all the pupils, and made me repeat mine very carefully.

“Write an exercise!” said he at last.

Just as I plunged my pen into the inkstand and brought it out—certainly rather too full of ink—a neighbour who was watching me, gave my elbow another jog, and calculated the effect so well, that the contents of the pen were shot all over the clean white collar of one of the smaller boys, a little red-headed fellow, who turned round to me in a fury. I tried to explain how the misfortune occurred, the professor was very angry, and I made myself as small as possible.

The exercise over, the professor proceeded to question us, that is, to question the new pupils.

“Borniquet!” said he, “stand up.”

Borniquet did not move. The boys looked at one another with surprise and began whispering, the professor a second time ordered the pupil named Borniquet to rise. Strange to say, Borniquet made no sign: this time there was a regular murmur of surprise among the pupils; the professor became red with indignation. I trembled at the bare idea

of the terrible punishment that awaited the luckless Borniquet ; I would not have been in his place for something.

“I desire you to stand up, Borniquet!” cried the professor, turning to the right,—just where I was. I looked now at the boys on each side of me with great curiosity ; it must be one of them, thought I.

“But you, you, you!” cried the professor again, pointing his finger right in my direction. I turned round and looked behind me. Where was Borniquet? The whole class now burst out laughing.

“You, the third boy on the second bench!” cried the professor, now quite losing patience.

The third boy on the second bench was me. The boys near me said, “Get up! get up!” As there was certainly some mistake somewhere, I still hesitated, when I felt a sudden and violent push, which came from I knew not where, and I was on my legs. I looked at the professor, feeling very foolish.

He was a worthy man : thinking he had a very stupid and nervous pupil before him he

questioned me in a kind, gentle tone to encourage me. Presently he stooped over his desk, and then looked up quite surprised. "But, I see," cried he, "that there is no pupil of the name of Borniquet on the list! Why what is your name?"

"Bicquerot," I said.

He tapped his forehead and declared that he had made a slip of the tongue. "That might happen to any one," he remarked, turning towards the laughing boys.

But it was a curious thing that he should have made the mistake in the name so many times. His tongue had a strange way of slipping. During the whole year I was called by the two names, and had to answer sometimes to Borniquet, sometimes to Bicquerot. And naturally my schoolfellows preferred calling me by my wrong name Bornicuet.

XXXIII.

MY NOSE STILL TROUBLES ME.

A curly headed little boy, with eyes sparkling with malice, and a tiny turned-up nose, came close up to me and said: "Don't you intend to give it back to me?"

"What do you mean?" I asked in surprise.

"You know very well," he answered, looking more impertinent than ever.

"But I assure you I do not," replied I.

"My nose; you know you have taken my share as well as your own, and it's very nasty of you," said this disagreeable child.

I reddened and turned away from him. The boy on the other side of me seized the opportunity of my turning towards him, to say: "My little Borniquet."

"Not Borniquet but Bicquerot!" I corrected.

"Ah, that's true," he went on. "But, my little Borniquet, tell me: what is it made of?"

I guessed that he alluded to my nose, and I shrugged my shoulders.

"He has a false nose," said my interlocutor in a voice loud enough for nearly everyone to



hear, "and he won't tell me if it is made of paste-board!"

All the boys near us began to laugh, and presently the whole class joined in the hilarity: never had an unfortunate nose become so popular so quickly.

All sorts of jokes were made about my luck-

less nose. Little pieces of paper were sent round with witty and unpleasant allusions to my prominent feature. A future caricaturist gained great applause by making a sketch representing the pupil Borniquet dressed as an acrobat beating a drum, and suspended from the trapeze by his monstrous nose.

The least reference made to *any* nose instantly attracted every eye to mine, and sent the class off into roars of laughter.

What a beginning to my college life ! I said to myself over and over again, If Marc had but not left me, all this would never have happened.

XXXIV.

“AZOR ! AZOR !”

WHEN school was over I made up my mind that I would slip quietly out of the college gates, and making my escape, run home as fast as my legs could carry me. Unfortunately

I did not succeed in doing this. In the playground I had to pass several boys who were collected together in groups before they went home. I blush to acknowledge that one of these boys—quite a little fellow too—planted himself resolutely in front of me and prevented me from passing him. After standing so for a second he suddenly seized me by the nose and pulled it till I cried out.

“Knock him down, he has insulted you,” cried out a boy noted for his love of fighting.

I looked at him, feeling stupid and uncertain what to do: he turned away in disgust, shrugging his shoulders.

I succeeded, however, in making my way out of college. To my great astonishment all the boys whom I passed, whether of my own class or not, seemed determined to call me “Azor.” “Here, here, Azor,” they cried. “Hi, hi, Azor, where is that dog Azor? Oh, here he is, and muzzled! He does not bite, not he. Get out, Azor!” These were the cries that greeted me on every side. Why should they call me by that name, which

in France is commonly given to a dog only ?

Here and there, in Pont-street, stood groups of college boys : as soon as I passed one of these clusters, the boys all burst out laughing and called after me, " Azor ! Azor ! "

Confused and frightened, I ran past houses and people and soon got ahead of the most advanced of the college boys. When I got in front of the Hospital, I saw two old men breathing a little fresh air at the door ; as I passed them, one gave the other a slap on the back and cried out, " Hullo, look at Azor ! " and I heard them bursting out into peals of laughter.

At the corner of one of the streets I had to pass by, there was a large grocer's shop ; one of the shop-boys was standing close to the pavement grinding coffee. As soon as I passed, the coffee-mill stopped and I heard the boy calling to the others, inside the shop, to come and look at " Azor ! "

The work people, coming out of the manufactory to their dinners, began to bark at me,



"HULLO, LOOK AT AZOR!"

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and hiss as if they were setting two dogs to fight.

At last, to my joy, I saw our house : I was safe ! But no, not yet : my hands trembled so that I could not turn the handle of the door : my nervous stamping attracted the attention of a painter who was painting a signboard in front of a restaurant near. The moment he saw me, he left off whistling a popular air, and, coming towards me, held his paint-brush horizontally about two feet from the ground, and promised "Azor, good Azor," a piece of sugar if he would jump over it nicely.

I rushed into the house and threw myself upon a chair, panting for breath.

XXXV.

THE THEORY OF SELF-DEFENCE.

"Has anyone hurt you?" anxiously inquired my mother.

I shook my head.

"What has happened, then, my poor boy?" asked she.

Then I burst out, in a voice of despair, with the history of all my wrongs. I declared that I would *never, never*, go inside the college doors again! I must be sent back to Miss Porquet. That if I was not sent back there——

Here my father's voice cut my passionate words short, and put a stop to my rage. I began to cry. My father looked at me and shrugged his shoulders.

When I told him of all my troubles, he replied, "Oh, is that all? When I was a boy, things were much worse than that. You *must* return laugh for laugh; and when anyone

ouches you, fall upon them and give it to them well. It should be a case of, 'You pinch me, I pinch you back; you throw a pen full of ink at me, I throw my inkstand at you; you pull my nose, I pull your ears; you call me Azor, I call you Médor; and there we are quits! You run after me to frighten me, I throw my leg out, and you tumble over it into the mud.' That's the way to manage, my little Paul, with schoolboys; you do that, and you need no longer be afraid; and you can then laugh at them in your turn. Ah! if it had been me!"

Then he took my hand, and doubled it to feel my fist, and said: "Now, look at that; that is a fist like any other boy's; even stronger and harder than many of your age and size have. Now I have told you before how easy it is to use it: you raise your arm like this, clenching your fist tightly; draw your wrist well back to your shoulder, and then strike out straight and hard. There you are, my son, that is all you have to do. Your adversary will be on his back most likely; then you must

help him to get up, and to dust himself, shake hands with him, and it's all over. Now see, my little man, how easy it is; will you not try?"

I replied, "Yes, papa;" but in such a piteous tone of voice, that my father could not help making a face at me. He then began walking up and down the room; and as he passed behind me, he suddenly cried out, "But what in the world have you got on your back?"

I shuddered. What could it be? Most likely some creeping thing; perhaps a caterpillar! But it was not; for my father now took from my back a placard, on which was written—"My name is Azor!" Those horrid boys had gummed it there!

My mother was most indignant at what she considered a great insult. The idea of giving me the name of a dog!

"An insult!" cried my father; "on the contrary, I consider it a compliment. For my part, I would much rather be a dog than a frog or a hare. A dog, at least, shows his

teeth and bites. At any rate, in my time, dogs knew how to bite ; but perhaps that is changed now, as so many other things are." He frowned as he looked at the placard again, and muttered between his teeth, " Ah ! if I had been in Azor's place to-day, my friends, you should have discovered that he could show his teeth ! "

XXXVI.

STILL A COWARD.

ALAS ! my father's advice bore no fruit. Each day brought me some new nickname ; I had soon as many names and titles as a Spanish grandee. I suffered all the bullying that timid little boys endure at the hands of their bigger schoolfellows. And, shame be it to me to say it, even babies of eight and nine years old were not afraid to run after me, and join in any tricks that were played me. These children would troop after me when we came

out of school, shrieking and yelling, driving me before them, brandishing their wallets as if they were tomahawks, and I used to fly! I, who was taller by a head than any of them! yes, I flew before them like a great, stupid stag hunted by a parcel of little curs. People would come to their doors to watch us and would laugh at me for a coward, and call me all sorts of names. And once, I remember, Colonel Boissot happened to see us, and he stood watching the hunt with his hat all on one side and a smile of contempt upon his face.

There was a little fellow at the college called Lehardy, he was only nine, but I had taken a great fancy to him because I thought I saw a likeness between him and Marc: we were great friends. He never joined the other little boys in chasing me, or behaving rudely to me, and as he lived near here I did we often walked to the college together.

One day when we were walking side by side and talking together, a little wretch of seven came up to Lehardy, and, seizing him by the

ear, pulled it cruelly merely for the pleasure of hearing the poor little boy scream. I saw his eyes, filled with great tears, raised to me as if imploring my protection. Pity and indignation fought a fierce battle with cowardice, I



trembled from head to foot, and was on the point of throwing myself upon Lehardy's aggressor. But, unfortunately, my heart failed me, and I ran away, stopping my ears not to hear the cries of my poor little friend.

All school-time I was haunted by those pleading eyes, I heard those screams of pain,

and I felt a kind of horror of myself. For the first time in my life I knew what it was to feel remorse. I could not attend to my lessons; all the professor's explanations were lost upon me, and it was impossible for me to answer a single question. When we came out of school I kept behind, I would not have found myself face to face with little Lehardy for anything in the world. He had trusted to me to help him, and I had failed him.

I avoided him the next day and the day following. By chance we met, and I then saw that the good little fellow bore me no malice. This only increased my contempt for myself. No one accused me, but my conscience gave me no peace. I was miserable, the thought of what I had done was insupportable to me.

It is very difficult to make up one's mind to have a tooth pulled out (at least when one is a bit of a coward). No amount of reasoning or advice seems to have much effect. One is always inclined to reply to kind friends, "I know you are right to advise me to have it out, but I dare not." However, when toothache

once sets in badly, it has more effect than all the advice in the world, and, much as we dread the operation, we fly to the dentist and have the tooth out, painful as it is. Now that was very like the situation in which I found myself. I felt now that I really could have the courage to fight with a boy of five or six, if by that means I could wipe out the recollection of my cowardice from my own memory and the memory of my poor little friend.

Unfortunately for my good resolutions, nobody else seemed inclined to torment Lehardy, and I felt that if I had to wait to display my courage, it would all evaporate like smoke.

XXXVII.

INCONSISTENCY.

My courage did not go the length of making me cry out to my school-fellows: "Whoever wishes to have a fight has only to touch Lehardy!" I only waited, determined that

another time, should he need my protection, he would not have to look for it in vain.

My good resolutions, I need not say, had no effect in changing my appearance. My nose had always excited laughter, and it did so no less now; when the boys made jokes about me, and gave me nicknames, such as Azor and Toucan, I did not dream of using my fists against them. No; my courage, if you could call it courage at all, had nothing aggressive in it; it was expectant only. My school-fellows saw no change in the unfortunate Bicquerot, at whom they were accustomed to poke their fun.

Still, come what might, I was decided that if any boy attempted to molest Lehardy, I would interfere, and would fight with all my strength in the cause of the poor little fellow whom I had deserted in such a cowardly way before. It was very strange that I should have felt so brave upon this one subject, and that my courage should have stopped there. The idea of resenting attacks upon myself never occurred to me. My thoughts were all

taken up with the punishment of Lehardy's aggressors.

I leave the trouble of deciding why my courage should have first appeared in this form, to any profound philosopher who may think it worth his while to consider the subject. Was it from a want of logic, or absence of selfishness?

XXXVIII.

MY PARENTS' DEVOTION TO ME.

WHEN I first became one of Miss Porquet's pupils, *The Count* had taunted me with the poverty of my parents. This idea once put into my head made me reflect upon many circumstances which I should have allowed to pass unnoticed had it not been there.

One evening, I remember, I came home from school earlier than usual as I was not feeling well, and I found my father and mother

at dinner. To my astonishment I found it consisted only of soup and salad! I understood now why I had always dined alone: my dinner was always substantial and most abundant. My father and mother stinted themselves for my sake, and wished to hide from me that they did so.

My father's half-pay as a retired officer was all we had to live upon, and part of that was devoted to helping a friend of his who was in difficulties.

I was deeply touched; but I dared not make any remarks upon what I had seen: first of all I should not have known how to express my feelings; but my love and respect for my father and mother increased each day that I lived.

Sometimes in the evening, while I was learning my lessons for next day, at the table close to the little lamp, my father, who would be seated near me, would fall asleep over his newspaper, and his head lean more and more forwards as he slept. I remember one night *in particular* that he did so, and I then noticed

that he had two great hollows at his temples, and that he had two deep lines down his cheeks. I felt heartbroken! My father was growing thin, and it was because he stinted himself in everything for my sake! I forgot my lessons, and I sat staring at my father as if I could never turn my eyes away from him.

Suddenly he woke up, and lifting his head, looked at me with surprise, and asked me what I was thinking about.

"Nothing, papa," I replied, turning very red; and I stooped over my lesson-book and appeared to be working very hard.

If I had dared I would have thrown my arms round my father's neck and have told him how I loved him, how I thanked him, yet how grieved I was.

Sometimes at night, when I had been in bed and asleep for some hours, I would awake suddenly. I would feel that I had slept a long time, and that it was very late; yet, through the door which led into my mother and father's room and which stood ajar, I could see a light burning, and by that light I could always see

my dear mother seated at a table, working, mending the household linen, and making or mending my clothes or my father's. Then I would cough gently, and my mother coming to my bedside would ask me if I did not feel well or had been dreaming; then how I used to throw my arms round her neck and kiss her, twenty times, one after the other, and tell her how I loved her with all my heart.

XXXIX.

A HUNTING COAT OF FORMER DAYS.

ONE morning I saw my mother looking at my jacket. She appeared troubled and anxious. I could read her thoughts: she was thinking that I must soon have a new one, and of the means of getting it. We were so poor! She sighed as she looked at my worn-out jacket, and as she did so I coloured as if I had been found out in some grave fault. She then went to my father and consulted with him for a long

while. After this consultation she went to her wardrobe—that wardrobe which was full of mysterious things—and from it she took a parcel, and laid it carefully on the table.

My father and I both came to the table, curious to see what was in the parcel: my mother took out the pins from the paper one by one, and put them in a little box. I felt very impatient to know what *could* be in that wonderful parcel, and I thought my mother's fingers moved very slowly. At last she uncovered a coat, carefully folded up, which she at first took to the window to examine, and then spread out upon the table. This coat was a most wonderful and beautiful garment in my eyes; it was a green velvet hunting-coat, with brass buttons. My mother smoothed it gently with her hand to get rid of any creases that there might be in it; then turning to my father she said, "This will do beautifully!"

I had never seen this coat before, it must have lain for many many years buried in my mother's wardrobe: it was no doubt a relic of better days: those days that I had heard my

father talk of when some old friend chanced to come and see him.

When I looked carefully at this wonderful coat, I discovered that it was made of the richest and softest velvet, and that the head of a fox was engraved upon each of the brass buttons. The fox was full face, standing out in relief from each of the buttons, his sharp nose and cunning eyes wonderfully true to nature. At sight of these buttons my admiration knew no bounds; my mother, smiling, placed her hand caressingly on my head and said, "Now thank your father, he is going to let me make this coat fit you, and it shall be yours!"

I jumped for joy, I turned head over heels, I thanked my father, I kissed my mother, I clapped my hands, and I determined that I would try hard to deserve all the kindness that my parents showed me. Yes, thought I to myself, I will use my fists even if only to prove that I am worthy to wear that splendid coat, which my father has worn, and which my dear mother is going to make fit me, with her own *hands*, and which has such grand buttons!

XL.

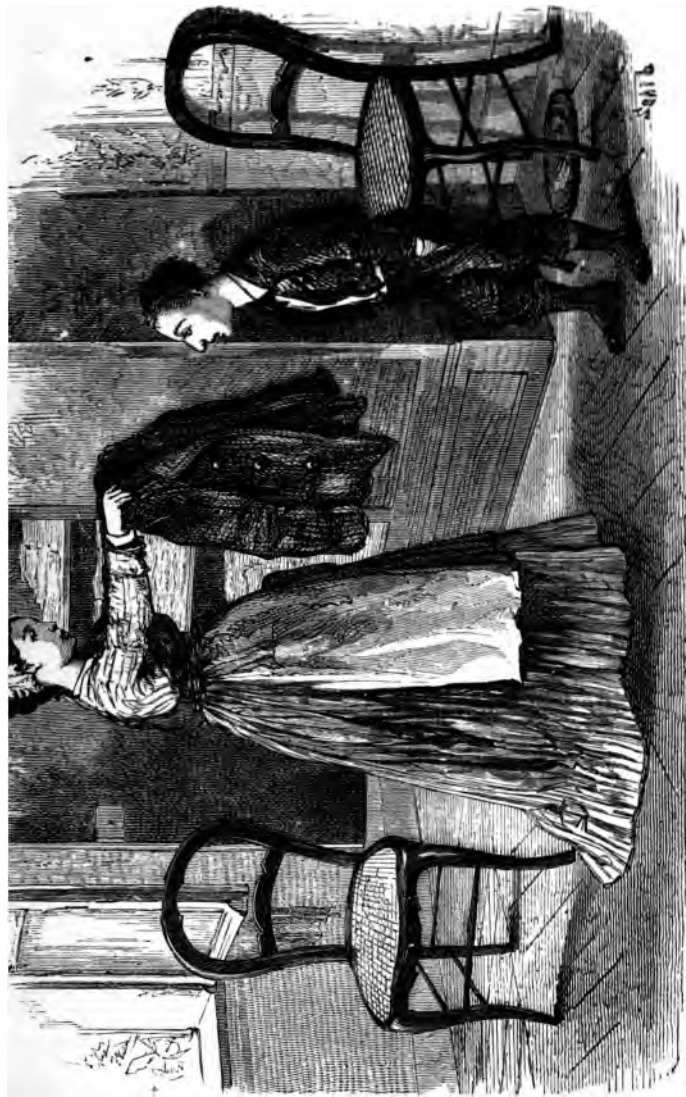
THE EFFECT OF MY NEW COAT ON MY
CHARACTER.

My mother first carefully unpicked my father's hunting coat, and then measuring me she cut out sundry patterns in grey paper, and then cut out the pieces of velvet from these patterns. With what anxiety, mingled with joy, did I watch her operations; it was delightful. The scissors went *crac, crac, crac!* as they cut through the velvet. What should I have done if they had cut too far? But no, there was no fear of that, my mother was too clever for that. All that she undertook was well done.

Every day when I returned from the college, I walked up softly behind my mother's chair as she sat working, to look over her shoulder and see "how we were getting on" with the wonderful coat. I remember one day a gentleman

called and remained talking to my mother for a long time. I was indeed wanting in charity towards that visitor ! what angry looks I gave him as I sat in a corner studying my Latin grammar ! What angry words I managed to think, without speaking ! All my thoughts were taken up by that splendid coat. I was longing to wear it, and this tiresome visitor prevented my mother from working at it for hours.

With that coat a new era in my life began, with it I seemed somehow to gain courage and address. The thought of it seemed to make me think better of myself. At all events I determined to try to be worthy of it. When I went to bed that night, I did all I could to keep awake, in order to watch my mother working through the door which stood a little way open : I said nothing, I lay quiet as a mouse. The bed clothes were pulled up to my nose and I was perfectly happy ; happy to feel myself so warm and comfortable, happy at seeing the bright lamp in the next room, which seemed to keep me company, happy at having such kind good parents, and



“WITH THAT COAT A NEW ERA IN MY LIFE BEGAN.”



above all was I not happy at possessing that beautiful velvet coat with those grand buttons! That night I was indeed a happy boy. Little by little my eyelids closed, and in spite of my efforts to keep awake, I was soon fast asleep.

The next morning when I awoke, the first thing I saw was the beautiful coat hanging on the back of one of the chairs. I sprang out of bed and soon had it on. Never had I been so delighted with anything before. It was a little too long and a little too wide; but it was all the better for that surely? I grew very fast, and this coat *must* last a long, long time. Just over the shoulders the velvet was rather loose and puckered, and appeared somewhat like the wings of a swallow in shape. But that really made me look broader, and was therefore an improvement to my figure. The coat had been made considerably smaller, although it was still rather large for me; but the buttons of course could not be made smaller in proportion, and they therefore covered far more space than formerly in proportion to the velvet. I was how-

ever only the more delighted at this : they were so beautiful !

My curiosity satisfied about the fit of my coat, I now thought of my dear mother, who I feared must have sat up half the night working, in order to give me pleasure. My heart was touched beyond measure at this thought, and I was filled with gratitude towards her. I took the coat in my arms and kissed it. I then went to find my mother that I might thank her. How happy she was at seeing my delight ! and when I started off to college, she stood at the window that she might watch me walking down the street dressed in my gorgeous new jacket.

XLI.

THE BEETLE.

THE first college boy that I met that morning begged me to give him the address of my tailor. The second came up to me with an expression of the most intense surprise, and passed his hand over my coat.

When I turned to him and asked him rather indignantly what he was about, he replied that he considered my jacket admirable! Now according to my idea this was not too strong an expression to apply to my velvet coat, but there was something in the tone in which it was said that annoyed me. Still more was I displeased when he walked round me two or three times, lifting his hands up in the air. He was joined almost immediately by half a dozen little rascals, who, following his example, raised their hands towards heaven, exclaiming in various tones: "Admirable!"

There were different groups of boys standing

about in the street, and in one of these groups I heard a boy holding forth, apparently much to the amusement of the others, about a certain green coat which had been cut out by a carpenter with a few strokes of his hatchet. In another group a boy said that "some one" was a wonderful hand at making coats! And in a third group one of the scholars declared that "*somebody*, not a hundred miles off, was exactly like a great green beetle!" And then on every side I heard "Beetle, Beetle!" sung out to the tune of a polka.

This pastime, which began to cause no little annoyance to the passers-by, was suddenly put a stop to by the striking of the college clock, and in a few seconds the boys were all hard at work at their studies,—or supposed to be so.

During lesson-time I could not help asking myself what they could mean about the beetle? and alas! wounding as it was to my pride, I could not but come to the conclusion that Beetle was now to be added to the list of my nicknames. One more or less, what did it matter? so I reasoned: still, I could not help

the feeling of annoyance this new name caused me. All doubt upon the subject was put an end to by the sight of a caricature which was passed from hand to hand along the forms, and which my eyes soon caught a glimpse of.

I easily recognised the absurd nose which had been so often drawn in imitation of my own. And now my coat, my beautiful coat, was caricatured too ! I knew it was intended for my coat, but how shamefully caricatured ! The buttons were made to look the size of dessert plates, and the whole coat appeared like the shell of a large green beetle with my face at the top. To prevent any mistakes upon the subject, the artist had written under the drawing—*Bicquerot, or the Green Beetle !*

Have you ever received a sudden and totally unexpected blow ? If so, you know the feeling of stupefaction that follows—as if one were completely overpowered ; then comes the pain which nearly makes one scream. And this is followed by a feeling of blind rage and a thirst for vengeance.

These are the sensations which I experienced on seeing the caricature and afterwards, while my schoolfellows were muttering their lessons round me.

I was astounded ! that jacket which I was so proud of—which I thought so much of for many reasons—was caricatured and laughed at by everyone. I felt, too, acute pain at the thought that my mother's work—that work which was one of the proofs of her great love for me—was made a subject of contemptuous ridicule. I was now wounded in the most sensitive part of my nature.

I felt the great tears rush to my eyes ; I would not let them fall, but courageously forced them back. I would not betray the pain and humiliation I was suffering. I buried my head in my hands, and kept my eyes fixed upon my Latin grammar ; but, with my mind's eye, I saw over again my mother seated at work, busy over my jacket, smiling to herself as she stitched away so indefatigably, forgetting all her own weariness in the thought of the pleasure she would give me.

Then, beside that picture, rose before me the laughing, the grimacing faces of the insolent boys!

The contrast made me furious! I was so wretched that I determined I would no longer bear it. At that moment my hand, unknown to myself, clenched the leg of the table nearest to me with such violence that the whole table shook; the boys raised their heads in surprise, and the professor begged the pupil "Bicquerot" to keep still.

The pupil Bicquerot said nothing; but when school was over, he walked out of college with his head in the air; his knees trembled with nervous emotion, but his heart was strong and determined.

XLII.

A FIGHT AT LAST.

"HISH! swish! there goes the Beetle!" cried an impudent voice in my ear.

I turned round quickly, and grinding my teeth, asked: "Who said that?"

Brideau, nicknamed "Cock of the Walk," who was walking just behind me, was so surprised at the expression of my face, that he retreated a step or two.

"Was it you?" I demanded.

He did not dare to deny it before all the other boys, lest they should think that he was afraid of me. So he replied in an insolent tone of voice, "Yes it *was* me!"

I threw myself upon him with clenched fists and my eyes shut. I dashed myself against something, and something was dashed against me. I felt a violent shock. My left eye suddenly became extremely painful, felt very heavy, and seemed to see ten thousand lighted candles

at once. It seemed as though my knees gave way, that I staggered two or three steps backwards and leant against something hard. I soon opened my eyes, or rather the right eye, —for the left was still tightly closed—and the ten thousand candles had turned into a number of bright circles which twisted about in the dark. I discovered that I had backed into a grocer's shop, between a barrel of herrings and a case of dried figs. Everyone looked at me with surprise. Some of my schoolfellows cried out "Bravo!" (most likely in derision) and others asked me, "if it hurt me much."

"Not at all," I answered; I was so excited, that I very nearly said, "on the contrary I feel the better for it!" Strange to say, nobody laughed at me. One boy kindly bathed my eye with cold water. To tell the truth I was very much surprised to find that a blow from my fist struck just by chance, in that way, should seem to change so entirely the conduct of my schoolfellows towards me.

Casting my sound eye round me, I tried to find out what had become of Brideau. I ex-

pected to see him come rushing at me; imagine my astonishment at seeing him going off with a crest-fallen and discomfited air. He had had one of his eyes much damaged, and his nose was bleeding into the bargain. It seemed that I had knocked him down. Someone said to me: "You've beaten him!" And, then only, I discovered to my intense surprise, that I was the conqueror.

Fancy! me the conqueror! could it be so? It seemed so strange that I could scarcely believe it! A conqueror, and gloriously wounded. I smiled involuntarily as I bathed my eye, which now saw black circles revolving in the light, and which seemed to me to be tremendously swelled! However I did not mind a black eye or anything else: I had fought in a good cause, and had conquered.

XLIII.

MY FATHER IS SATISFIED.

WHEN I discovered that my coat had not suffered in the fray I was quite contented, and I returned home whistling as I went, for the first time since I had been to college. What balm victory spreads upon our wounds! By the time I reached our house I merely seemed to feel a little stiffness in my left eye. My father was quite right when he said that nothing was easier than to give a blow with your fist. Nothing is easier, and nothing easier than to receive one. In the twinkling of an eye I had given one and had it returned; though, for the life of me, I could not say how it came about: and I do not therefore intend to give a lecture upon the subject.

I would not have told my parents what had taken place for anything in the world: they would have been sure to ask what I had fought about, and they would have felt hurt had they

known the reason. My mother, seeing that I appeared troubled at her anxious inquiries about my black eye, and that my replies were evasive, thought it wiser not to question me further; and my father dreamed so little that his poor coward of a son could have received his wounds in battle that he imagined every possible reason for them rather than the true one.

The news was now spread in the college that Bicquerot was decidedly eccentric, that he had curious fancies, and this was why they thought so. I had allowed them all, even the very little boys, to call me all sorts of names and I had taken no notice, but had appeared meek and gentle to a fault: I had been called Azor, Toucan and Borniquet, and had not stirred, but being once called a beetle! my nature was changed, I became furious, and hit out right and left, in the blindness of my rage.

At the end of the term my father almost fell off his chair when reading my report from the college. All was well enough till he arrived at

the remarks upon my general conduct, and then came the words "Very bad."

"What does this mean?" inquired my father in an angry tone of voice, marking, with his thumb, the objectionable adjective. As I did not reply, he read on the next page the following words, "quarrelsome and fond of fighting." He appeared stupefied. Could it be possible that my conduct was described as very bad, because of my love of fighting? He turned to me, and resting his first finger on my chest, exclaimed, "You! you have fought! is it true?"

"Yes, papa," I answered.

"Were you beaten?" he then inquired.

"No," said I; "I gave some blows with my fist, and had some given back to me."

"Real good blows?" cried my father, "bang, bang?"

"Real good blows," I answered.

"Often?" he asked.

"Well, yes, pretty often," said I.

"What a young rascal!" said my father,

pretending to pinch my ear ; and in a whisper he continued : " kiss me, my boy ! "

XLIV.

EXTREMES ARE BAD.

It is often difficult for men—then how much more so for boys—to avoid running into extremes. I ought to have been contented with being no longer a coward, but alas! I was not, for I now became somewhat of a bully. I grew excited and furious at very little. It did not require the opprobrious name of beetle to be applied to me now in order to make me angry. The time arrived when the least word would make me begin a fight at once. I began to amuse myself by frightening the smaller boys and making them fly before me. And the big boys, even, were very careful how they approached me.

One day I called at Miss Porquet's school

merely to see *The Count*. I found him—poor creature, left still by his parents in this baby school—standing in the playground with his cap on one side and his hands in his pockets. I stared at him from head to



foot, and asked him if he had any remark to make about my coat, my trousers, my neck-tie, or any part of my dress. And I inquired if he was sure that he wouldn't like to come into a corner with me and learn how they fought at college? He stared at

me with frightened eyes, declined my offer, and rushed into the schoolroom, where he locked himself in, screaming as loud as he could. As for Brideau, I called him any nickname I chose, and he dared not say anything. But alas! I was puffed up with pride and vanity! I used to look at myself in the glass with admiration and respect, and murmur to myself the words, "Bravest of the brave!" But everything has a reverse side: the "Bravest of the brave" unfortunately had his ears one day well pulled by a footman whose afternoon nap he disturbed by ringing a large bell close to his head. The "Bravest of the brave" one day had a dispute with a cur in the street whose temper was more imperfect than his teeth, the consequence of which was that the brave one's trowsers were shortened on one leg by a foot, and his mamma had to sit up half the night repairing the disaster. Seeing which the "Bravest of the brave" cried himself to sleep under the bed clothes, vowing he would never disturb street dogs again.

The "Bravest of the brave" did not like

Robert Boissot, and lost no opportunity of contradicting him and of being generally disagreeable to him, in order to pay off old scores. Alas! the brave one received from the said Robert Boissot so violent a blow on the top of



his nose, that he was obliged to bury it in his pocket-handkerchief and fly home amid shouts of derision. The mischief done was very considerable, the toucan's beak had been so badly treated that it was obliged to be wrapped up in as many bandages as a mummy, and it was

more than three weeks before it could be unrolled, and viewed again by the light of day. When it was again displayed to the eyes of the public it was discovered to lean over considerably to one side.

They say that Michael-Angelo one day received a blow on the nose from his friend Torregiani. This knock on the nose changed for ever the expression of the great man, and made him morose and solitary. The knock on *my* nose, given by Robert Boissot, also changed *my* expression, and my character. During the time that my nose was recovering itself I had leisure to reflect. Those reflections changed my ideas upon many subjects; and made me wiser.

Little by little, I learned to live without running into the extreme of either cowardice or bullying; and my life passed much as the lives of other people.

XLV.

A LAST CHAPTER, WRITTEN BY ANOTHER HAND.

HERE terminate the confessions of a coward as told by himself. But I will add some details respecting his after life which his own modesty prevented him from relating. When he says that his "life passed much as the lives of other people," he should have added, "like the lives of those who, first distinguishing themselves at the college of Saint Cyr, follow a glorious career in the army."

When sub-lieutenant, Bicquerot was the first to scale the walls of a certain Arab village, and then received a severe sabre cut which helped his promotion to lieutenant.

Lieutenant Bicquerot became captain without any wounds, as he was then with his regiment at Bordeaux, and not near any fighting. As peace prevailed at that time and

he had not seen his parents since he left Saint Cyr, he got leave; and then might be observed by the worthy inhabitants of Loches, two



Captains Bicquerot walking arm-in-arm about the streets.

Captain Bicquerot did his duty nobly at the siege of Sebastopol. He was wounded by a ball, and became insensible; when he regained consciousness in the hospital he was shown the rosette of the Legion of Honour which *now* decorated his buttonhole, and was told

that he lost consciousness as a Captain, but that he awoke to find himself Major.

At the commencement of the Italian campaign Bicquerot was Lieutenant-Colonel. He was made full Colonel at the battle of Magenta. He owed this promotion to his extreme courage and presence of mind displayed upon the occasion. And he was publicly complimented by the general in command.

On his return to France, Colonel Bicquerot was sent to Tours with his regiment. He often went over from thence to Loches to see his beloved mother and father. Captain Bicquerot called his son "the colonel" with immense pride. His mother did not call him "the colonel," but how rejoiced she was when "*her Paul*" came to see her, and on Sunday gave her his arm to take her to church.

Dr. Lombalot's mind was greatly disturbed while Colonel Bicquerot lived at Tours. He would have liked him to live there always for one reason, and that was because he played chess so admirably, and often had a game with

the worthy doctor. But for the sake of his phrenological theories the doctor would have liked to see the colonel start for Cochin China. For after having said that so distinguished an officer was wanting in the bump of combativeness, how could he talk of the truths of phrenology again! However, he did talk of them, though in his heart the obstinate old man could not have believed in them.

At the time when Bicquerot and his friend Marc Sublaine passed that happy holiday at Bois-Clair, there was a little baby sister of Marc's being carried about by her nurse. Miss Marie Sublaine was then cutting her first teeth. As that young person, at that time of her life, was of a somewhat misanthropical turn of mind, and passed all her time in the nursery, it is not to be wondered at, that "the Coward" omitted to mention her when he recounted his confessions. However, one knows that, in general, young gentlemen of nine or ten profess the most extreme contempt for the society of babies; above all, babies *that have a habit*, like Miss Marie Sublaine,

of crying for nothing, and of scratching and biting the noses and fingers of their friends.

Nevertheless Miss Marie Sublaine became in time the wife of Colonel Bicquerot. And a very happy couple they were.

THE END.

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